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CASA BRACCIO

"As he stood there repeating the name."—Vol. II., p. 331.

CASA BRACCIO

BY

F. MARION CRAWFORD
AUTHOR OF "SARACINESCA," "PIETRO GHISLERI," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. CASTAIGNE

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GLORIA DALRYMPLE.

CASA BRACCIO.

PART II. — *Continued.*

GLORIA DALRYMPLE.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DURING the first few months of their marriage Reanda and Gloria believed themselves happy, and really were, since there is no true criterion of man's happiness but his own belief in it. They took a small furnished apartment at the corner of the Macel de' Corvi, with an iron balcony overlooking the Forum of Trajan. They would have had no difficulty in obtaining other rooms adjoining the two Reanda had so long occupied in the Palazzetto Borgia, but Gloria was opposed to the arrangement, and Reanda did not insist upon it. The Forum of Trajan was within a convenient distance of the palace, and he went daily to his work.

"Besides," said Gloria, "you will not always be painting frescoes for Donna Francesca. I want

you to paint a great picture, and send it to Paris and get a medal."

She was ambitious for him, and dreamed of his winning world-wide fame. She loved him, and she felt that Francesca had caged him, as Francesca herself had once felt. She wished to remove him altogether from the latter's influence, both because she was frankly jealous of his friendship for the older woman, and wished to have him quite to herself, and also in the belief that he could do greater things if he were altogether freed from the task of decorating the palace, which had kept him far too long in one limited sequence of production. There was, moreover, a selfish consideration of vanity in her view, closely linked with her unbounded admiration for her husband. She knew that she was beautiful, and she wished his greatest work to be a painting of herself.

Gloria, however, wished also to take a position in Roman society, and the only person who could help her and her husband to cross the line was Francesca Campodonico. It was therefore impossible for Gloria to break up the intimacy altogether, however much she might wish to do so. Meanwhile, too, Reanda had not finished his frescoes.

Soon after the marriage, which took place in the summer, Dalrymple left Rome, intending to be absent but a few months in Scotland, where his

presence was necessary on account of certain family affairs and arrangements consequent upon the death of Lord Redin, the head of his branch of the Dalrymples, and of Lord Redin's son only a few weeks later, whereby the title went to an aged great-uncle of Angus Dalrymple's, who was unmarried, so that Dalrymple's only brother became the next heir.

Gloria was therefore quite alone with her husband. Paul Griggs had also left Rome for a time on business connected with his journalistic career. He had in reality been unwilling to expose himself to the unnecessary suffering of witnessing Gloria's happiness, and had taken the earliest opportunity of going away. Gloria herself was at first pleased by his departure. Later, however, she wished that he would come back. She had no one to whom she could turn when she was in need of any advice on matters which Reanda could not or would not decide.

Reanda himself was at first as absolutely happy as he had expected to be, and Francesca Campodonico congratulated herself on having brought about a perfectly successful match. While he continued to work at the Palazzetto Borgia, the two were often together for hours, as in former times. Gloria had at first come regularly in the course of the morning and sat in the hall while her husband was painting, but she had found it a monotonous affair after a while. Reanda could not talk per-

petually. More than once, indeed, he introduced his wife's face amongst the many he painted, and she was pleased, though not satisfied. He could not make her one of the central figures which appeared throughout the series, because the greater part of the work was done already, and it was necessary to preserve the continuity of each resemblance. Gloria wished to be the first everywhere, though she did not say so.

Little by little, she came less regularly in the mornings. She either stayed at home and studied seriously the soprano parts of the great operas then fashionable, or invented small errands which kept her out of doors. She sometimes met Reanda when he left the palace, and they walked home together to their midday breakfast.

Little by little, also, Francesca fell into the habit of visiting Reanda in the great hall at hours when she was sure that Gloria would not be there. It was not that she disliked to see them together, but rather because she felt that Gloria was secretly antagonistic. There was a small, perpetual, unexpressed hostility in Gloria's manner which could not escape so sensitive a woman as Francesca. Reanda felt it, too, but said nothing. He was almost foolishly in love with his wife, and he was devotedly attached to Francesca herself. For the present he was very simple in his dealings with himself, and he quietly shut his eyes to the possi-

bility of a disagreement between the two women, though he felt that it was in the air.

Instead of diminishing with his marriage, the obligations under which he was placed towards Donna Francesca were constantly increasing. She saw and understood his wife's social ambition, and gave herself trouble to satisfy it. Reanda felt this keenly, and while his gratitude increased, he inwardly wished that each kindness might be the last. But Gloria had the ambition and the right to be received in society on a footing of equality, and no one but Francesca Campodonico could then give her what she wanted.

She did not obtain what is commonly called social success, though many people received her and her husband during the following winter. She got admiration in plenty, and she herself believed that it was friendship. Of the two, Reanda, who had no social ambition at all, was by far the more popular. He was, as ever, quiet and unassuming, as became a man of his extraordinary talent. He so evidently preferred in society to talk with intelligent people rather than to make himself agreeable to the very great, that the very great tried to attract him to themselves, in order to appear intelligent in the eyes of others. They altogether forgot that he was the son of the steward of Gerano, though he sometimes spoke unaffectedly of his boyhood.

But Gloria reminded people too often that she had a right to be where she was, as the daughter of Angus Dalrymple, who might some day be Lord Redin. Fortunately for her, no one knew that Dalrymple had begun life as a doctor, and very far from such prospects as now seemed quite within the bounds of realization. But even as the possible Lord Redin, her father's existence did not interest the Romans at all. They were not accustomed to people who thought it necessary to justify their social position by allusions to their parentage, and since Francesca Campodonico had assured them that Dalrymple was a gentleman, they had no further questions to ask, and raised their eyebrows when Gloria volunteered information on the subject of her ancestors. They listened politely, and turned the subject as soon as they could, because it bored them.

But the admiration she got was genuine of its kind, as admiration and as nothing else. Her magnificent voice was useful to ancient and charitable princesses who wished to give concerts for the benefit of the deserving poor, but her face disturbed the hearts of those excellent ladies who had unmarried sons, and of other excellent ladies who had gay husbands. Her beauty and her voice together were a danger, and must be admired from a distance. Gloria and her husband were asked to many houses on important occasions. Gloria went

to see the princesses and duchesses, and found them at home. Their cards appeared regularly at the small house in the Macel de' Corvi, but there was always a mystery as to how they got there, for the princesses and the duchesses themselves did not appear, except once or twice when Francesca Campodonico brought one of her friends with her, gently insisting that there should be a proper call. Gloria understood, and said bitter things about society when she was alone, and by degrees she began to say them to her husband.

"These Romans!" she exclaimed at last. "They believe that there is nobody like themselves!"

Angelo Reanda's face had a pained look, as he laid his long thin hand upon hers.

"My dear," he said gently. "You have married an artist. What would you have? I am sure, people have received us very well."

"Very well! Of course — as though we had not the right to be received well. But, Angelo — do not say such things — that I have married an artist —"

"It is quite true," he answered, with a smile. "I work with my hands. They do not. There is the difference."

"But you are the greatest artist in the world!" she cried enthusiastically, throwing her arms round his neck, and kissing him again and again. "It is ridiculous. In any other city, in London, in Paris,

people would run after you, people would not be able to do enough for you. But it is not you; it is I. They do not like me, Angelo, I know that they do not like me! They want me at their big parties, and they want me to sing for them — but that is all. Not one of them wants me for a friend. I am so lonely, Angelo."

Her eyes filled with tears, and he tried to comfort her.

"What does it matter, my heart?" he asked, soothingly. "We have each other, have we not? I, who adore you, and you, who love me —"

"Love you? I worship you! That is why I wish you to have everything the world holds, everything at your feet."

"But I am quite satisfied," objected Reanda, with unwise truth. "Do not think of me."

She loved him, but she wished to put upon him some of her uncontrollable longing for social success, in order to justify herself. To please her, he should have joined in her complaint. Her tears dried suddenly, and her eyes flashed.

"I will think of you!" she cried. "I have nothing else to think of. You shall have it all, everything — they shall know what a man you are!"

"An artist, my dear, an artist. A little better than some, a little less good than others. What can society do for me?"

She sighed, and the colour deepened a little in her cheeks. But she hid her annoyance, for she loved him with a love at once passionate and intentional, compounded of reality and of a strong inborn desire for emotion, a desire closely connected with her longing for the life of the stage, but now suddenly thrown with full force into the channel of her actual life.

Reanda began to understand that his wife was not happy, and the certainty reacted strongly upon him. He became more sad and abstracted from day to day, when he was not with her. He longed, as only a man of such a nature can long, for a friend in whom he could confide, and of whom he could ask advice. He had such a friend, indeed, in Francesca Campodonico, but he was too proud to turn to her, and too deeply conscious that she had done all she could to give Gloria the social position the latter coveted.

Francesca, on her side, was not slow to notice that something was radically wrong. Reanda's manner had changed by degrees since his marriage. His pride made him more formal with the woman to whom he owed so much, and she felt that she could do nothing to break down the barrier which was slowly rising between them. She suffered, in her way, for she was far more sincerely attached to the man than she recognized, or perhaps would have been willing to recognize, when she allowed

herself to look the situation fairly in the face. For months she struggled against anything which could make her regret the marriage she had made. But at last she admitted the fact that she regretted it, for it thrust itself upon her and embittered her own life. Then she became conscious in her heart of a silent and growing enmity for Gloria, and of a profound pity for Angelo Reanda. Being ashamed of the enmity, as something both sinful in her eyes, and beneath the nobility of her nature, she expressed it, if that were expression, by allowing her pity for the man to assert itself as it would. That, she told herself, was a form of charity, and could not be wrong, however she looked at it.

All mention of Gloria vanished from her conversation with Reanda when they were alone together. At such times she did her best to amuse him, to interest him, and to take him out of himself. At first she had little success. He answered her, and sometimes even entered into an argument with her, but as soon as the subject dropped, she saw the look of harassed preoccupation returning in his face. So far as his work was concerned, what he did was as good as ever. Francesca thought it was even better. But otherwise he was a changed man.

In the course of the winter Paul Griggs returned. One day Francesca was sitting in the hall with Reanda, when a servant announced that Griggs

had asked to see her. She glanced at Reanda's face, and instantly decided to receive the American alone in the drawing-room, on the other side of the house.

"Why do you not receive him here?" asked Reanda, carelessly.

"Because —" she hesitated. "I should rather see him in the drawing-room," she added a moment later, without giving any further explanation.

Griggs told her that he had come back to stay through the year and perhaps longer. She took a kindly interest in the young man, and was glad to hear that he had improved his position and prospects during his absence. He rarely found sympathy anywhere, and indeed needed very little of it. But he was capable of impulse, and he had long ago decided that Francesca was good, discreet, and kind. He answered her questions readily enough, and his still face warmed a little while she talked with him. She, on her part, could not help being interested in the lonely, hard-working man who never seemed to need help of any kind, and was climbing through life by the strength of his own hands. There was about him at that time an air of reserved power which interested though it did not attract those who knew him.

Suddenly he asked about Gloria and her husband. There was an odd abruptness in the question, and a hard little laugh, quite unnecessary, accompanied

it. Francesca noted the change of manner, and remembered how she had at first conceived the impression that Griggs admired Gloria, but that Gloria was repelled by him.

"I suppose they are radiantly happy," he said.

Francesca hesitated, being truthful by nature, as well as loyal. There was no reason why Griggs should not ask her the question, which was natural enough, but she had many reasons for not wishing to answer it.

"Are they not happy?" he asked quickly, as her silence roused his suspicions.

"I have never heard anything to the contrary," answered Francesca, dangerously accurate in the statement.

"Oh!" Griggs uttered the ejaculation in a thoughtful tone, but said no more.

"I hope I have not given you the impression that there is anything wrong," said Francesca, showing her anxiety too much.

"I saw Dalrymple in England," answered Griggs, with ready tact. "He seems very well satisfied with the match. By the bye, I daresay you have heard that Dalrymple stands a good chance of dying a peer, if he ever dies at all. With his constitution that is doubtful."

And he went on to explain to Francesca the matter of the Redin title, and that as Dalrymple's elder brother, though married, was childless, he

himself would probably come into it some day. Then Griggs took his leave without mentioning Reanda or Gloria again. But Francesca was aware that she had betrayed Reanda's unhappiness to a man who had admired Gloria, and had probably loved her before her marriage. She afterwards blamed herself bitterly and very unjustly for what she had done.

Griggs went away, and called soon afterwards at the small house in the Macel de' Corvi. He found Gloria alone, and she was glad to see him. She told him that Reanda would also be delighted to hear of his return. Griggs, who wrote about everything which gave him an opportunity of using his very various knowledge, wrote also upon art, and besides the first article he had written about Reanda, more than a year previously, had, since then, frequently made allusion to the artist's great talent in his newspaper correspondence. Reanda was therefore under an obligation to the journalist, and Gloria herself was grateful. Moreover, Englishmen who came to Rome had frequently been to see Reanda's work in consequence of the articles. One old gentleman had tried to induce the artist to paint a picture for him, but had met with a refusal, on the ground that the work at the Palazzetto Borgia would occupy at least another year. The Englishman said he should come back and try again.

Between Griggs and Gloria there was the sort

of friendly confidence which could not but exist under the circumstances. She had known him long, and he had been her father's only friend in Rome. She remembered him from the time when she had been a mere child, before her sudden transition to womanhood. She trusted him. She understood perfectly well that he loved her, but she believed that she had it in her power to keep his love as completely in the background as he himself had kept it hitherto. Her instinct told her also that Griggs might be a strong ally in a moment of difficulty. His reserved strength impressed her even more than it impressed Francesca Campodonico. She received him gladly, and told him to come again.

He came, and she asked him to dinner, feeling sure that Reanda would wish to see him. He accepted the first invitation and another which followed before long. By insensible degrees, during the winter, Griggs became very intimate at the house, as he had been formerly at Dalrymple's lodgings.

"That young man loves you, my dear," said Reanda, one day in the following spring, with a smile which showed how little anxiety he felt.

Gloria laughed gaily, and patted her husband's hand.

"What men like that call love!" she answered. "Besides — a journalist! And hideous as he is!"

"He certainly has not a handsome face," laughed Reanda. "I am not jealous," he added, with sudden gravity. "The man has done much for my reputation, too, and I know what I owe him. I have good reason for wishing to treat him well, and I am all the more pleased, if you find him agreeable."

He made the rather formal speech in a decidedly formal tone, and with the unconscious intention of justifying himself in some way, though he was far too simple by nature to suspect himself of any complicated motive. She looked at him, but did not quite understand.

"You surely do not suppose that I ever cared for him!" she said, readily suspecting that he suspected her.

He started perceptibly, and looked into her eyes. She was very truly in earnest, but her exaggerated self-consciousness had given her tone a colour which he did not recognize. Some seconds passed before he answered her. Then the gentle light came into his face as he realized how much he loved her.

"How foolish you are, love!" he exclaimed. "But Griggs is younger than I — it would not be so very unnatural if you had cared for him."

She broke out passionately.

"Younger than you! So am I, much younger than you! But you are young, too. I will not

have you suggest that you are not young. Of course you are. You are unkind, besides. As though it could make the slightest difference to me, if you were a hundred years old! But you do not understand what my love for you is. You will never understand it. I wish I loved you less; I should be happier than I am."

He drew her to him, reluctant, and the pained look which Francesca knew so well came into his face.

"Are you unhappy, my heart?" he asked gently. "What is it, dear? Tell me!"

She was nervous, and the confession or complaint had been unintentional and the result of irritation more than of anything else. The fact that he had taken it up made matters much worse. She was in that state in which such a woman will make a mountain of a molehill rather than forego the sympathy which her constitution needs in a larger measure than her small sufferings can possibly claim.

"Oh, so unhappy!" she cried softly, hiding her face against his coat, and glad to feel the tears in her eyes.

"But what is it?" he asked very kindly, smoothing her auburn hair with one hand, while the other pressed her to him.

As he looked over her head at the wall, his face showed both pain and perplexity. He had

not the least idea what to do, except to humour her as much as he could.

"I am so lonely, sometimes," she moaned. "The days are so long."

"And yet you do not come and sit with me in the mornings, as you used to do at first." There was an accent of regret in his voice.

"She is always there," said Gloria, pressing her face closer to his coat.

"Indeed she is not!" he cried, and she could feel the little breath of indignation he drew. "I am a great deal alone."

"Not half as much as I am."

"But what can I do?" he asked, in despair. "It is my work. It is her palace. You are free to come and go as you will, and if you will not come —"

"I know, I know," she answered, still clinging to him. "You will say it is my fault. It is just like a man. And yet I know that you are there, hour after hour, with her, and she is young and beautiful. And she loves you — oh, I know she loves you!"

Reanda began to lose patience.

"How absurd!" he exclaimed. "It is ridiculous. It is an insult to Donna Francesca to say that she is in love with me."

"It is true." Gloria suddenly raised her head and drew back from him a very little. "I am a

woman," she said. "I know and I understand. She meant to sacrifice herself and make you happy, by marrying you to me, and now she regrets it. It is enough to see her. She follows you with her eyes as you move, and there is a look in them — "

Reanda laughed, with an effort.

"It is altogether too absurd!" he said. "I do not know what to say. I can only laugh."

"Because you know it is true," answered Gloria. "It is for your sake that she has done it all, that she makes such a pretence of being friendly to me, that she pushes us into society, and brings her friends here to see me. They never come unless she brings them," she added bitterly. "There is no fear of that. The Duchess of Astrardente would not have her black horses seen standing in the Macel de' Corvi, unless Donna Francesca made her do it and came with her."

"Why not?" asked Reanda, simply, for his Italian mind did not grasp the false shame which Gloria felt in living in a rather humble neighbourhood.

"She would not have people know that she had friends living in such a place," Gloria answered.

Unwittingly she had dealt Reanda a deadly thrust.

He had fallen in love with her and had married her on the understanding with himself, so to say,

that she was in all respects as much a great lady as Donna Francesca herself, and he had taken it for granted that she must be above such pettiness. The lodging was extremely good and had the advantage of being very conveniently situated for his work. It had never struck him that because it was in an unfashionable position, Gloria could imagine that the people she knew would hesitate to come and see her. Since their marriage she had done and said many little things which had shaken his belief in the thoroughness of her refinement. She had suddenly destroyed that belief now, by a single foolish speech. It would be hard to build it up again.

Like many men of genius he could not forgive his own mistake, and Gloria was involved in this one. Moreover, as an Italian, he fancied that she secretly suspected him of meanness, and when Italians are not mean, there is nothing which they resent more than being thought to be so. He had plenty of money, for he had always lived very simply before his marriage, and Dalrymple gave Gloria an allowance.

His tone changed, when he answered her, but she was far from suspecting what she had done.

"We will get another apartment at once," he said quietly.

"No," she answered at once, protesting, "you must not do anything of the kind! What an idea!

To change our home merely because it is not on the Corso or the Piazza di Venezia!"

"You would prefer the Corso?" inquired Angelo. "That is natural. It is more gay."

The reflexion that the view of the deserted Forum of Trajan was dull suggested itself to him as a Roman, knowing the predilection of Roman women of the middle class for looking out of the window.

"It is ridiculous!" cried Gloria. "You must not think of it. Besides — the expense —"

"The expense does not enter into the question, my dear," he answered, having fully made up his mind. "You shall not live in a place to which you think your friends may hesitate to come."

"Friends! They are not my friends, and they never mean to be," she replied more hotly. "Why should I care whether they will take the trouble to come and see me or not? Let them stay away, if I am not good enough for them. Tell Donna Francesca not to bring them — not to come herself any more. I hate to feel that she is thrusting me down the throat of a society that does not want me! She only does it to put me under an obligation to her. I am sure she talks about me behind my back and says horrid things —"

"You are very unjust," said Reanda, hurt by the vulgarity of the speech and deeply wounded in his own pride.

"You defend her! You see!" And the colour rose in Gloria's cheeks.

"She has done nothing that needs defence. She has acted always with the greatest kindness to me and to us. You have no right to suppose that she says unkind things of you when you are not present. I cannot imagine what has come over you to-day. It must be the weather. It is sirocco."

Gloria turned away angrily, thinking that he was laughing at her, whereas the suggestion about the weather was a perfectly natural one in Rome, where the southeast wind has an undoubted effect upon the human temper.

But the seeds of much discussion were sown on that close spring afternoon. Reanda was singularly tenacious of small purposes, as he was of great ideas where his art was concerned, and his nature though gentle was unforgiving, not out of hardness, but because he was so sensitive that his illusions were easy to destroy.

He went out and forthwith began to search for an apartment of which his wife should have no cause to complain. In the course of a week he found what he wanted. It was a part of the second floor of one of the palaces on the Corso, not far from the Piazza di Venezia. It was partially furnished, and without speaking to Gloria he had it made comfortable within a few days. When it was

ready, he gave her short warning that they were to move immediately.

Strange to say, Gloria was very much displeased, and did not conceal her annoyance. She really liked the small house in the Macel de' Corvi, and resented the way in which her husband had taken her remarks about the situation. To tell the truth, Reanda had deceived himself with the idea that she would be delighted at the change, and had spent money rather lavishly, in the hope of giving her a pleasant surprise. He was proportionately disappointed by her unexpected displeasure.

"What was the use of spending so much money?" she asked, with a discontented face. "People will not come to see us because we live in a fine house."

"I did not take the house with that intention, my dear," said Reanda, gently, but wounded and repelled by the remark and the tone.

"Well then, we might have stayed where we were," she answered. "It was much cheaper, and there was more sun for the winter."

"But this is gayer," objected Reanda. "You have the Corso under the window."

"As though I looked out of the window!" exclaimed Gloria, scornfully. "It was so nice — our little place there."

"You are hard to please, my dear," said the artist, coldly.

Then she saw that she had hurt him, which she had not meant to do. Her own nature was self-conscious and greedy of emotion, but not sensitive. She threw her arms round him, and kissed him and thanked him.

But Reanda was not satisfied. Day by day when Francesca looked at him, she saw the harassed expression deepening in his face, and she felt that every furrow was scored in her own heart. And she, in her turn, grew very grave and thoughtful.

CHAPTER XXV.

Paul Griggs was a man compounded of dominant qualities and dormant contradictions of them which threatened at any moment to become dominant in their turn for a time. He himself almost believed that he had two separate individualities, if not two distinct minds.

It may be doubted whether it can be good for any man to dwell long upon such an idea in connexion with himself, however distinctly he may see in others the foundation of truth on which it rests. To Griggs, however, it presented itself so clearly that he found it impossible not to take it into consideration in the more important actions of his life. The two men were very sharply distinguished in his thoughts. The one man would do what the other would not. The other could think thoughts above the comprehension of the first.

The one was material, keen, strong, passionate, and selfish; pre-eminently adapted for hard work; conscientious in the force of its instinct to carry out everything undertaken by it to the very end, and judging that whatever it undertook was good and worth finishing; having something of the

nature of a strong piece of clockwork which being wound up must run to the utmost limit before stopping, whether regulated to move fast or slow, with a fateful certainty independent of will; possessed of such uncommon strength as to make it dangerous if opposed while moving, and at the same time having an extraordinary inertia when not wound up to do a certain piece of work; self-reliant to a fault, as the lion is self-reliant in the superiority of physical endowment; gentle when not opposed, because almost incapable of action without a determinate object and aim; but developing an irresistible momentum when the inertia was overcome; thorough, in the sense in which the tide is thorough, in rising evenly and all at the same time, and as ruthless as the tide because it was that part of the whole man which was a result, and which, therefore, when once set in motion was almost beyond his control; reasonable only because, as a result, it followed its causes logically, and required a real cause to move it at first.

The other man in him was very different, almost wholly independent of the first, and very generally in direct conflict with it, at that time. It was an imaginative and meditative personality, easily deceived into assuming a false premiss, but logical beyond all liability to deception when reasoning from anything it had accepted. Its processes were intuitively correct and almost instantaneous, while

its assumptions were arbitrary in the extreme. It might begin to act at any point whatsoever, and unlike the material man, which required a will to move it at first, it struck spontaneously with the directness of straight lightning from one point to another, never misled in its path, though often fatally mistaken in the value of the points themselves.

Most men who have thought much, wisely or foolishly, and who have seen much, good or bad, are more or less conscious of their two individualities. Idle and thoughtless people are not, as a rule. With Griggs, the two were singularly distinct and independent. Sometimes it seemed to him that he sat in judgment, as a third person, between them. At other moments he felt himself wholly identified with the one and painfully aware of the opposition of the other. The imaginative part of him despised the material part for its pride of life and lust of living. The material part laughed to scorn the imaginative one for its false assumptions and unfounded beliefs. When he could abstract himself from both, he looked upon the intuitive personality as being himself in every true sense of the word, and upon the material man as a monstrous overgrowth and encumbrance upon his more spiritual self.

When he began to love Gloria Dalrymple, she appealed to both sides of his nature. For once, the

spiritual instinct coincided with the direction given to the material man by a very earthly passion.

The cause of this was plain enough and altogether simple. The spiritual instinct had taken the lead. He had known Gloria before she had been a woman to be loved. The maiden genius of the girl had spoken to the higher man from a sphere above material things, and had created in him one of those assumed premisses for subsequent spiritual intuition from which he derived almost the only happiness he knew. Then, all at once, the woman had sprung into existence, and her young beauty had addressed itself to the young gladiator with overwhelming force. The woman fascinated him, and the angelic being his imagination had assumed in the child still enchanted him.

He was not like Reanda; for his sensitiveness was one-sided, and therefore only half vulnerable. Gloria's faults were insignificant accidents of a general perfectness, the result of having arbitrarily assumed a perfect personality. They could not make the path of his spiritual intuitive love waver, and they produced no effect at all against his direct material passion. To destroy the prime beautiful illusion, something must take place which would upset the mistaken assumption from a point beyond it, so to say. As for the earthly part of his love, it was so strong that it might well stand alone, even if the other should disappear altogether.

Then came honour, and the semi-religious morality of the man, defending the woman against him, for the sake of the angel he saw through her. Chief of all, in her defence, stood his own conviction that she did not love him, and never would, nor ever could. To all intents and purposes, too, he had been her father's friend, though between the two men there had been little but the similarity of their gloomy characters. It was the will of the material man to be governed, and as no outward influence set it in motion, it remained inert, in unstable equilibrium, as a vast boulder may lie for ages on the very edge of a precipice, ready but not inclined to fall. There was fatality in its stillness, and in the certainty that if moved it must crash through everything it met.

Gloria had not the least understanding of the real man. She thought about him often during the months which followed his return, and a week rarely passed in which she did not see him two or three times. Her thoughts of him were too ignorant to be confused. She was conscious, rather than aware, that he loved her, but it seemed quite natural to her, at her age, that he should never express his love by any word or deed.

But she compared him with her husband, innocently and unconsciously, in matters where comparison was almost unavoidable. His leonine strength of body impressed her strongly, and she

felt his presence in the room, even when she was not looking at him. Reanda was physically a weak and nervous man. When he was painting, the movements of his hand seemed to be independent of his will and guided by a superior unseen power, rather than directed by his judgment and will. Paul Griggs never made the slightest movement which did not strike Gloria as the expression of his will to accomplish something. He was wonderfully skilful with his hands. Whatever he meant to do, his fingers did, forthwith, unhesitatingly. His mental processes were similar, so far as she could see. If she asked him a question, he answered it categorically and clearly, if he were able. If not, he said so, and relapsed into silence, studying the problem, or trying to force his memory to recall a lost item. Reanda, on the other hand, answered most questions with the expression of a vague opinion, often right, but apparently not founded on anything particular. The accuracy of Griggs sometimes irritated the artist perceptibly, in conversation; but he took an interest in what Griggs wrote, and made Gloria translate many of the articles to him, reading aloud in Italian from the English. Strange to say, they pleased him for the very qualities which he disliked in the man's talk. The Italian mind, when it has developed favourably, is inclined to specialism rather than to generalization, and Griggs wrote of many things

as though he were a specialist. He had enormous industry and great mechanical power of handling language.

"I have no genius," he said one day to Gloria, when she had been admiring something he had written, and using the extravagant terms of praise which rose easily to her lips. "Your husband has genius, but I have none. Some day I shall astonish you all by doing something very remarkable. But it will not be a work of genius."

It was in the late autumn days, more than a year and a half after Gloria's marriage. The southeast wind was blowing down the Corso, and the pavements were yellow and sticky with the moistened sand-blast from the African desert. The grains of sand are really found in the air at such times. It is said that the undoubted effect of the sirocco on the temper of Southern Italy is due to the irritation caused by inhaling the fine particles with the breath. Something there is in that especial wind, which changes the tempers of men and women very suddenly and strangely.

Gloria and her companion were seated in the drawing-room that afternoon, and the window was open. The wind stirred the white curtains, and now and then blew them inward and twisted them round the inner ones, which were of a dark grey stuff with broad brown velvet bands, in a fashion then new. Gloria had been singing, and sat leaning

sideways on the desk of the grand piano. A tall red Bohemian glass stood beside the music on one of the little sliding shelves meant for the candles, and there were a few flowers in it, fresh an hour ago, but now already half withered and drooping under the poisonous breath of the southeast. The warm damp breeze came in gusts, and stirred the fading leaves and Gloria's auburn hair, and the sheet of music upright on the desk. Griggs sat in a low chair not far from her, his still face turned towards her, his shadowy eyes fixed on her features, his sinewy hands clasped round his crossed knees. The nature of the great athlete showed itself even in repose — the broad dark throat set deep in the chest, the square solidity of the shoulders, the great curved lines along the straightened arms, the small, compact head, with its close, dark hair, bent somewhat forward in the general relaxation of the resting muscles. In his complete immobility there was the certainty of instant leaping and flash-like motion which one feels rather than sees in the sleeping lion.

Gloria looked at him thoughtfully with half-closed lids.

"I shall surprise you all," he repeated slowly, "but it will not be genius."

"You will not surprise me," Gloria answered, still meeting his eyes. "As for genius, what is it?"

"It is what you have when you sing," said Griggs. "It is what Reanda has when he paints."

"Then why not what you do when you write?"

"The difference is simple enough. Reanda does things well because he cannot help it. When I do a thing well it is because I work so hard at it that the thing cannot help being done by me. Do you understand?"

"I always understand what you tell me. You put things so clearly. Yes, I think I understand you better than you understand yourself."

Griggs looked down at his hands and was silent for a moment. Mechanically he moved his thumb from side to side and watched the knot of muscle between it and the forefinger, as it swelled and disappeared with each contraction.

"Perhaps you do understand me. Perhaps you do," he said at last. "I have known you a long time. It must be four years, at least — ever since I first came here to work. It has been a long piece of life."

"Indeed it has," Gloria answered, and a moment later she sighed.

The wind blew the sheet of music against her. She folded it impatiently, threw it aside and resumed her position, resting one elbow on the narrow desk. The silence lasted several seconds, and the white curtains flapped softly against the heavy ones.

"I wonder whether you understand my life at all," she said presently.

"I am not sure that I do. It is a strange life, in some ways — like yourself."

"Am I strange?"

"Very."

"What makes you think so?"

Again he was silent for a time. His face was very still. It would have been impossible to guess from it that he felt any emotion at the moment.

"Do you like compliments?" he asked abruptly.

"That depends upon whether I consider them compliments or not," she answered, with a little laugh.

"You are a very perfect woman in very imperfect surroundings," said Griggs.

"That is not a compliment to the surroundings, at all events. I do not know whether to laugh or not. Shall I?"

"If you will. I like to hear you laugh."

"You should hear me cry!" And she laughed again at herself.

"God forbid!" he said gravely.

"I do sometimes," she answered, and her face grew suddenly sad, as he watched her.

He felt a quick pain for her in his heart.

"I am sorry you have told me so," he said. "I do not like to think of it. Why should you cry? What have you to cry for?"

"What should you think?" she asked lightly, though no smile came with the words.

"I cannot guess. Tell me. Is it because you still wish to be a singer? Is that it?"

"No. That is not it."

"Then I cannot guess." He looked for the answer in her face. "Will you tell me?" he asked after a pause.

"Of what use could it be?" Her eyes met his for a moment, the lids fell, and she turned away. "Will you shut the window?" she said suddenly. "The wind blows the things about. Besides, it is getting late."

He rose and went to the window. She watched him as he shut it, turning his back to her, so that his figure stood out distinct and black against the light. She realized what a man he was. With those arms and those shoulders he could do anything, as he had once caught her in the air and saved her life, and then, again, as he had broken the cords that night at Mendoza's house. There was nothing physical which such a man could not do. He was something on which to rely in her limited life, an absolute contrast to her husband, whose vagueness irritated her, while his deadness of sensibility, where she had wrung his sensitiveness too far, humiliated her in her own eyes. She had kept her secret long, she thought, though she had kept it for the simple reason that she had no one in whom to confide.

Griggs came back from the window and sat down near her again in the low chair, looking up into her face.

"Mr. Griggs," she said, turning from his eyes and looking into the piano, "you asked me a question just now. I should like to answer it, if I were quite sure of you."

"Are you not sure of me?" he asked. "I think you might be, by this time. We were just saying that we had known each other so long."

"Yes. But — all sorts of things have happened in that time, you know. I am not the same as I was when I first knew you."

"No. You are married. That is one great difference."

"Too great," said she. "Honestly, do you think me improved since my marriage?"

"Improved? No. Why should you improve? You are just what you were meant to be, as you always were."

"I know. You called me a perfect woman a little while ago, and you said my surroundings were imperfect. You must have meant that they did not suit me, or that I did not suit them. Which was it?"

"They ought to suit you," said Griggs. "If they do not, it is not your fault."

"But I might have done something to make them suit me. I sometimes think that I have not treated them properly."

"Why should you blame yourself? You did not make them, and they cannot unmake you. You have a right to be yourself. Everybody has. It is the first right. Your surroundings owe you more than you owe to them, because you are what you are, and they are not what they ought to be. Let them bear the blame. As for not treating them properly, no one could accuse you of that."

"I do not know — some one might. People are so strange, sometimes."

She stopped, and he answered nothing. Looking down into the open piano, she idly watched the hammers move as she pressed the keys softly with one hand.

"Some people are just like this," she said, smiling, and repeating the action. "If you touch them in a certain way, they answer. If you press them gently, they do not understand. Do you see? The hammer comes just up to the string, and then falls back again without making any noise. I suppose those are my surroundings. Sometimes they answer me, and sometimes they do not. I like things I can be sure of."

"And by things you mean people," suggested Griggs.

"Of course."

"And by your surroundings you mean — what?"

"You know," she answered in a low voice, turning her face still further away from him.

"Reanda?"

She hesitated for a moment, knowing that her answer must have weight on the man.

"I suppose so," she said at last. "I ought not to say so — ought I? Tell me the truth."

"The truth is, you are unhappy," he answered slowly. "There is no reason why you should not tell me so. Perhaps I might help you, if you would let me."

He almost regretted that he had said so much, little as it was. But she had wished him to say it, and more, also. Still turning from him, she rested her chin in her hand. His face was still, but there was the beginning of an expression in it which she had never seen. Now that the window was shut it was very quiet in the room, and the air was strangely heavy and soft and dim. Now and then the panes rattled a little. Griggs looked at the graceful figure as Gloria sat thinking what she should say. He followed the lines till his eyes rested on what he could see of her averted face. Then he felt something like a sharp, quick blow at his temples, and the blood rose hot to his throat. At the same instant came the bitter little pang he had known long, telling him that she had never loved him and never could.

"Are you really my friend?" she asked softly.

"Yes." The word almost choked him, for there was not room for it and for the rest.

She turned quietly and surveyed the marble mask with curious inquiry.

"Why do you say it like that," she asked; "as though you would rather not? Do you grudge it?"

"No." He spoke barely above his breath.

"How you say it!" she exclaimed, with a little laugh that could not laugh itself out, for there was a strange tension in the air, and on her and on him. "You might say it better," she added, the pupils of her eyes dilating a little so that the room looked suddenly larger and less distinct.

She knew the sensation of coming emotion, and she loved it. She had never thought before that she could get it by talking with Paul Griggs. He did not answer her.

"Perhaps you meant it," she said presently. "I hardly know. Did you?"

"Please be reasonable," said Griggs, indistinctly, and his hands gripped each other on his knee.

"How oddly you talk!" she exclaimed. "What have I said that was unreasonable?"

She felt that the emotion she had expected was slipping from her, and her nerves unconsciously resented the disappointment. She was out of temper in an instant.

"You cannot understand," he answered. "There is no reason why you should. Forgive me. I am nervous to-day."

"You? Nervous?" She laughed again, with a

little scorn. "You are not capable of being nervous."

She was dimly conscious that she was provoking him to something, she knew not what, and that he was resisting her. He did not answer her last words. She went back to the starting-point again, dropping her voice to a sadder key.

"Honestly, will you be my friend?" she asked, with a gentle smile.

"Heart and soul — and hand, too, if you want it," he said, for he had recovered his speech. "Tell me what the trouble is. If I can, I will take you out of it.".

It was rather an odd speech, and she was struck by the turn of the phrase, which expressed more strength than doubt of power to do anything he undertook.

"I believe you could," she said, looking at him. "You are so strong. You could do anything."

"Things are never so hard as they look, if one is willing to risk everything," he answered. "And when one has nothing to lose," he added, as an after-thought.

She sighed, and turned away again, half satisfied.

"There is nothing to risk," she said. "It is not a case of danger. And you cannot take my trouble and tear it up like a pack of cards with those hands of yours. I wish you could. I am unhappy — yes, I have told you so. But what can you do to

help me? You cannot make my surroundings what they are not, you know."

"No — I cannot change your husband," said Griggs.

She started a little, but still looked away.

"No. You cannot make him love me," she said, softly and sadly.

The big hands lost their hold on one another, and the deep eyes opened a little wider. But she was not watching him.

"Do you mean to say —" He stopped.

She slowly bent her head twice, but said nothing.

"Reanda does not love you?" he said, in wondering interrogation. "Why — I thought —" He hesitated.

"He cares no more for me than — that!" The hand that stretched towards him across the open piano tapped the polished wood once, and sharply.

"Are you in serious earnest?" asked Griggs, bending forward, as though to catch her first look when she should turn.

"Does any one jest about such things?" He could just see that her lips curled a little as she spoke.

"And you — you love him still?" he asked, with pressing voice.

"Yes — I love him. The more fool I."

The words did not grate on him, as they would

have jarred on her husband's ear. The myth he had imagined made perfections of the woman's faults.

"It is a pity," he said, resting his forehead in his hand. "It is a deadly pity."

Then she turned at last and saw his attitude.

"You see," she said. "There is nothing to be done. Is there? You know my story now. I have married a man I worship, and he does not care for me. Take it and twist it as you may, it comes to that and nothing else. You can pity me, but you cannot help me. I must bear it as well as I can, and as long as I must. It will end some day — or I will make it end."

"For God's sake do not talk like that!"

"How should I talk? What should I say? Is it of any use to speak to him? Do you think I have not begged him, implored him, besought him, almost on my knees, to give up that work and do other things?"

Griggs looked straight into her eyes a moment and then almost understood what she meant.

"You mean that he — that when he is painting there —" He hesitated.

"Of course. All day long. All the bitter live-long day! They sit there together on pretence of talking about it. You know — you can guess at least — it is the old, old story, and I have to suffer for it. She could not marry him — because she is

a princess and he an artist — good enough for me — God knows, I love him! Too good for her, ten thousand times too good! But yet not good enough for her to marry! He needed a wife, and she brought us together, and I suppose he told her that I should do very well for the purpose. I was a good subject. I fell in love with him — that was what they wanted. A wife for her favourite! O God! When I think of it — "

She stopped suddenly and buried her face in both her hands, as she leaned upon the piano.

"It is not to be believed!" The strong man's voice vibrated with the rising storm of anger.

She looked up again with flashing eyes and pale cheeks.

"No!" she cried. "It is not to be believed! But you see it now. You see what it all is, and how my life is wrecked and ruined before it is half begun. It would be bad enough if I had married him for his fame, for his face, for his money, for anything he has or could have. But I married him because I loved him with all my soul, and worshipped him and everything he did."

"I know. We all saw it."

"Of course — was it anything to hide? And I thought he loved me, too. Do you know?" She grew more calm. "At first I used to go and sit in the hall when he was at work. Then he grew silent, and I felt that he did not want me. I

thought it was because he was such a great artist, and could not talk and work, and wanted to be alone. So I stayed away. Then, once, I went there, and she was there, sitting in that great chair — it shows off the innocence of her white face, you know! The innocence of it!" Gloria laughed bitterly. "They were talking when I came, and they stopped as soon as the door opened. I am sure they were talking about me. Then they seemed dreadfully uncomfortable, and she went away. After that I went several times. Once or twice she came in while I was there. Then she did not come any more. He must have told her, of course. He kept looking at the door, though, as if he expected her at any moment. But she never came again in those days. I could not bear it — his trying to talk to me, and evidently wishing all the time that she would come. I gave up going altogether at last. What could I do? It was unbearable. It was more than flesh and blood could stand."

"I do not wonder that you hate her," said Griggs. "I have often thought you did."

Gloria smiled sadly.

"Yes," she answered. "I hate her with all my heart. She has robbed me of the only thing I ever had worth having — if I ever had it. I sometimes wonder — or rather, no. I do not wonder, for I know the truth well enough. I have been

over and over it again and again in the night. He never loved me. He never could love any one but her. He knew her long ago, and has loved her all his life. Why should he put me in her place? He admired me. I was a beautiful plaything — no, not beautiful — " She paused.

"You are the most beautiful woman in the world," said Paul Griggs, with deep conviction.

He saw the blush of pleasure in her face, saw the fluttering of the lids. But he neither knew that she had meant him to say it, nor did he judge of the vast gulf her mind must have instantaneously bridged, from the outpouring of her fancied injuries and of her hatred for Francesca Campodonico, to the unconcealable satisfaction his words gave her.

"I have heard him say that, too," she answered a moment later. "But he did not mean it. He never meant anything he said to me — not one word of it all. You do not know what that means," she went on, working herself back into a sort of despairing anger again. "You do not know. To have built one's whole life on one thing, as I did! To have believed only one thing, as I did! To find that it is all gone, all untrue, all a wretched piece of acting — oh, you do not know! That woman's face haunts me in the dark — she is always there, with him, wherever I look, as they are together now at her house. Do you understand? Do you

know what I feel? You pity me — but do you know? Oh, I have longed for some one — I have wished I had a dog to listen to me — sometimes — it is so hard to be alone — so very hard — "

She broke off suddenly and hid her face again.

"You are not alone. You have me — if you will have me."

Before he had finished speaking the few words, the first sob broke, violent, real, uncontrollable. Then came the next, and then the storm of tears. Griggs rose instinctively and came to her side. He leaned heavily on the piano, bending down a little, helpless, as some men are at such moments. She did not notice him, and her sobs filled the still-room. As he stood over her he could see the bright tears falling upon the black and white ivory keys. He laid his trembling hand upon her shoulder. He could hardly draw his breath for the sight of her suffering.

"Don't — don't," he said, almost pathetic in his lack of eloquence when he thought he most needed it.

One of her hot hands, all wet with tears, went suddenly to her shoulder, and grasped his that lay there, with a convulsive pressure, seeming to draw him down as she bowed herself almost to the key-board in her agony of weeping. Then, without thought, his other hand, cold as ice, was under her throat, bringing her head gently back upon his

arm, till the white face was turned up to his. Sob by sob, more distantly, the tempest subsided, but still the great tears swelled the heavy lids and ran down across her face upon his wrist. Then the wet, dark eyes opened and looked up to his, above her head.

"Be my friend!" she said softly, and her fingers pressed his very gently.

He looked down into her eyes for one moment, and then the passion in him got the mastery of his honourable soul.

"How can I?" he cried in a broken, choking voice. "I love you!"

In an instant he was standing up, lifting her high from the floor, and the lips that had perhaps never kissed for love before, were pressed upon hers. What chance had she, a woman, in those resistless arms of his? In her face was the still, fateful look of the dead nun, rising from the far grave of a buried tragedy.

In his uncontrollable passion he crushed her to him, holding her up like a child. She struggled and freed her hands and pressed them both upon his two eyes.

"Please — please!" she cried.

There was a pitiful ring in the tone, like the bleating of a frightened lamb. He hurt her too, for he was overstrong when he was thoughtless.

She cried out to him to let her go. But as she

hung there, it was not all fear that she felt. There came with it an uncertain, half-delirious thrill of delight. To feel herself but a feather to his huge strength, swung, tossed, kissed, crushed, as he would. There was fear already, there was all her innocent maiden-like resistance, beating against him with might and anger, there was the feminine sense of injury by outrageous violence; but with it all there was also the natural woman's delight in the main strength of the natural man, that could kill her in an instant if he chose, but that could lift her to itself as a little child and surround her and protect her against the whole world.

"Please — please!" she cried again, covering his fierce eyes and white face with her hands and trying to push him away. The tone was pathetic in its appeal, and it touched him. His arms relaxed, tightened again with a sort of spasm, and then she found herself beside him on her feet. A long silence followed.

Gloria sank into a chair, glanced at him and saw that his face was turned away, looked down again and then watched him. His chest heaved once or twice, as though he had run a short sharp race. One hand grasped the back of a chair as he stood up. All at once, without looking at her, he went to the window and stood there, looking out, but seeing nothing. The soft damp wind made the panes of glass rattle. Still neither broke the silence. Then

he came to her and stood before her, looking down, and she looked down, too, and would not see him. She was more afraid of him now than when he had lifted her from her feet, and her heart beat fast. She wondered what he would say, for she supposed that he meant to ask her forgiveness, and she was right.

"Gloria — forgive me," he said.

She looked up, a little fear of him still in her face.

"How can I?" she asked, but in her voice there was forgiveness already.

Her womanly instinct, though she was so young, told her that the fault was hers, and that considering the provocation it was not a great one — what were a few kisses, even such kisses as his, in a lifetime? And she had tempted him beyond all bounds and repented of it. Before the storm she had raised in him, her fancied woes sank away and seemed infinitely small. She knew that she had worked herself up to emotion and tears, though not half sure of what she was saying, that she had exaggerated all she knew and suggested all she did not know, that she had almost been acting a part to satisfy something in her which she could not understand. And by her acting she had roused the savage truth in her very face and it had swept down everything before it. She had not guessed such possibilities. Before the tempest of his love all she had ever felt or dreamed of feeling seemed

"Gioria — forgive me!" — Vol. II., p. 50.

colourless and cold. She dreaded to rouse it again, and yet she could never forget the instant thrill that had quivered through her when he had lifted her from her feet.

When she had answered him with her question, he stood still in silence for a moment. She was too perfect in his eyes for him to cast the blame upon her, yet he knew that it had not been all his fault. And in the lower man was the mad triumph of having kissed her and of having told her, once for all, the whole meaning of his being. She looked down, and he could not see her eyes. There was no chair near. To see her face he dropped upon his knee and lightly touched her hands that lay idly in her lap. She started, fearing another outbreak.

"Please — please!" he said softly, using the very word she had used to him.

"Yes — but —" She hesitated and then raised her eyes.

The mask of his face was all softened, and his lips trembled a little. His hands quivered, too, as they touched hers.

"Please!" he repeated. "I promise. Indeed, I promise. Forgive me."

She smiled, all at once, dreamily. All his emotion, and her desire for it, were gone.

"I asked you to be my friend," she said. "I meant it, you know. How could you? It was not kind."

"No — but forgive me," he insisted in a pleading tone.

"I suppose I must," she said at last. "But I shall never feel sure of you again. How can I?"

"I promise. You will believe me, not to-day, perhaps, nor to-morrow, but soon. I will be just what I have always been. I will never do anything to offend you again."

"You promise me that? Solemnly?" She still smiled.

"Yes. It is a promise. I will keep it. I will be your friend always. Give me something to do for you. It will make it easier."

"What can I ask you to do? I shall never dare to speak to you about my life again."

"I think you will, when you see that I am just as I used to be. And you forgive me, quite?"

"Yes. I must. We must forget to-day. It must be as though it had never happened. Will you forget it?"

"I will try." But of that he knew the utter impossibility.

"If you try, you can succeed. Now get up. Be reasonable."

He took her hand in both of his. She made a movement to withdraw it, and then submitted. He barely touched it with his lips and rose to his feet instantly.

"Thank you," she said simply.

She had never had such a mastery of charm over him as at that moment. But his mood was changed, and there was no breaking out of the other man in him, though he felt again the quick sharp throb in the temples, and the rising blood at his throat. The higher self was dominant once more, and the features was as still as a statue's.

He took leave of her very quickly and went out into the damp street and faced the gusty southeast wind.

When he was gone, she rose and went to the window with a listless step, and gazed idly through the glass at the long row of windows in the palace opposite, and then went back and sank down, as though very weary, upon a sofa far from the light. There was a dazed, wondering look in her face and she sat very still for a long time, till it began to grow dark. In the dusk she rose and went to the piano and sang softly to herself. Her voice never swelled to a full note, and the chords which her fingers sought were low and gentle and dreamy.

While she was singing, the door opened noiselessly, and Reanda came in and stood beside her. She broke off and looked up, a little startled. The same wondering, half-dazed look was in her face. Her husband bent down and kissed her, and she kissed him silently.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Donna Francesca had put off her mourning, and went into the world again during that winter. The world said that she might marry if she so pleased, and was somewhat inclined to wonder that she did not. She could have made a brilliant match if she had chosen. But instead, though she appeared everywhere where society was congregated together, she showed a tendency to religion which surprised her friends.

A tendency to religion existed in the Braccio family, together with various other tendencies not at all in harmony with it, nor otherwise edifying. Those other tendencies seemed to be absent in Francesca, and little by little her acquaintances began to speak of her as a devout person. The Prince of Gerano even hinted that she might some day be an abbess in the Carmelite Convent at Subiaco, as many a lady of the great house had been before her. But Francesca was not prepared to withdraw from the world altogether, though at the present time she was very unhappy.

She suspected herself of a great sin, besides reproaching herself bitterly with many of her deeds

which deserved no blame at all. Yet she was by no means morbid, nor naturally inclined to perpetual self-examination. On the contrary, she had always been willing to accept life as a simple affair which could not offer any difficulties provided that one were what she meant by "good" — that is, honest in word and deed, and scrupulous in doing thoroughly and with right intention those things which her religion required of her, but in which only she herself could judge of her own sincerity.

Of late, however, she had felt that there was something very wrong in all her recent life. The certainty of it dawned by degrees, and then burst upon her suddenly one day when she was with Reanda.

She had long ago noticed the change in his manner, the harassed look, and the sad ring in his voice, and for a time his suffering was her sorrow, and there was a painful pleasure in being able to feel for him with all her heart. He had gone through a phase which had lasted many months, and the change was great between his former and his present self. He had suffered, but indifference was creeping upon him. It was clear enough. Nothing interested him but his art, and perhaps her own conversation, though even that seemed doubtful to her.

They were alone together on a winter's afternoon

in the great hall. The work was almost done, and they had been talking of the more mechanical decorations, and of the style of the furniture.

"It is a big place," said Francesca, "but I mean to fill it. I like large rooms, and when it is finished, I will take up my quarters here, and call it my boudoir."

She smiled at the idea. The hall was at least fifty feet long by thirty wide.

"All the women I know have wretched little sitting-rooms in which they can hardly turn round," she said. "I will have all the space I like, and all the air and all the light. Besides, I shall always have the dear Cupid and Psyche, to remind me of you."

She spoke the last words with the simplicity of absolute innocence.

"And me?" he asked, as innocently and simply as she. "What will you do with me?"

"Whatever you like," she said, taking it quite for granted, as he did, that he was to work for her all his life. "You can have a studio in the house, just as it used to be, if you please. And you can paint the great canvas for the ceiling of the dining-room. Or shall I restore the old chapel? Which should you rather do — oil-painting, or fresco?"

"You would not want the altar piece which I should paint," he said, with sudden sadness.

"Santa Francesca?" she asked. "It would have to be Santa Francesca. The chapel is dedicated to her. You could make a beautiful picture of her — a portrait, perhaps —" she stopped.

"Of yourself? Yes, I could do that," he answered quickly.

"No," she said, and hesitated. "Of your wife," she added rather abruptly.

He started and looked at her, and she was sorry that she had spoken. Gloria's beautiful face had risen in her mind, and it had seemed generous to suggest the idea. Finding a difficulty in telling him, she had thought it her duty to be frank.

He laughed harshly before he answered her.

"No," he said. "Certainly not a portrait of my wife. Not even to please you. And that is saying much."

He spoke very bitterly. In the few words, he poured out the pent-up suffering of many months. Francesca turned pale.

"I know, and it is my fault," she said in a low voice.

"Your fault? No! But it is not mine."

His hands trembled violently as he took up his palette and brushes and began to mix some colours, not knowing what he was doing.

"It is my fault," said Francesca, still very white, and staring at the brick floor. "I have seen it. I could not speak of it. You are unhappy — mis-

erable. Your life is ruined, and I have done it. I!"

She bit her lip almost before the last word was uttered; for it was stronger and louder than she had expected it to be, and the syllable rang with a despairing echo in the empty hall.

Reanda shook his head, and bent over his colours with shaking hands, but said nothing.

"I was so happy when you were married," said Francesca, forcing herself to speak calmly. "She seemed such a good wife for you — so young, so beautiful. And she loves you —"

"No." He shook his head energetically. "She does not love me. Do not say that, for it is not true. One does not love in that way — to-day a kiss, to-morrow a sting — to-day honey, to-morrow snake-poison. Do not say that it is love, for it is not true. The heart tells the truth, all alone in the breast. A thousand words cannot make it tell one lie. But for me — it is finished. Let us speak no more of love. Let us talk of our good friendship. It is better."

"Eh, let us speak of it, of this friendship! It has cost tears of blood!"

Francesca, in the sincerity of what she felt, relapsed into the Roman dialect. Almost all Romans do, under any emotion.

"Everything passes," answered Reanda, laying his palette aside, and beginning to walk up and

down, his hands in his pockets. "This also will pass," he added, as he turned. "We are men. We shall forget."

"But not I. For I did it. Your sadness cuts my heart, because I did it. I — I alone. But for me, you would be free."

"Would to Heaven!" exclaimed the artist, almost under his breath. "But I will not have you say that it is your fault!" he cried, stopping before her. "I was the fool that believed. A man of my age — oh, a serious man — to marry a child! I should have known. At first, I do not say. I was the first. She thought she had paradise in her arms. A husband! They all want it, the husband. But I, who had lived and seen, I should have known. Fool, fool! Ignorant fool!"

The words came out vehemently in the strong dialect, and the nervous, heart-wrung man struck his breast with his clenched fist, and his eyes looked upward.

"Reanda, Reanda! What are you saying? When I tell you that I made you marry her! It was here, — I was in this very chair, — and I told you about her. And I asked her here with intention, that you might see how beautiful she was. And then, neither one nor two, she fell in love with you! It would have been a miracle if you had not married her. And her father, he was satisfied.

May that day be accursed when I brought them here to torment you!"

She spoke excitedly, and her lip quivered. He began to walk again with rapid, uncertain strides.

"For that — yes!" he said. "Let the day bear the blame. But I was the madman. Who leaves the old way and follows the new knows what he leaves, but not what he may find. I might have been contented. I was so happy! God knows how happy I was!"

"And I!" exclaimed Francesca, involuntarily; but he did not hear her.

She felt a curious sense of elation, though she was so truly sorry for him, and it disturbed her strangely. She looked at him and smiled, and then wondered why the smile came. There is a ruthless cruelty in the half-unconscious impulses of the purest innocence, of which vice itself might be ashamed in its heart. It is simple humanity's assertion of its prior right to be happy. She smiled spontaneously because she knew that Reanda no longer loved Gloria, and she felt that he could not love her again; and for a while she was too simply natural to quarrel with herself for it, or to realize what it meant.

He was nervous, melancholy, and unstrung, and he began to talk about himself and his married life for the first time, pouring out his sufferings and thoughtless of what Francesca might think and

feel. He, too, was natural. Unlike his wife, he detested emotion. To be angry was almost an illness to his over-finely organized temperament. In a way, Griggs had been right in saying that Reanda seemed to paint as an agent in the power of an unseen, directing influence. Beauty made him feel itself, and feel for it in his turn with his brush. The conception was before him, guiding his hand, before a stroke of the work was done. There was the lightning-like co-respondence and mutual reaction between thought and execution, which has been explained by some to be the simultaneous action of two minds in man, the subjective and the objective. In doing certain things he had the patience and the delicacy of one for whom time has no meaning. He could not have told whether his hand followed his eye, or his eye followed his hand. His whole being was of excessively sensitive construction, and emotion of any kind, even pleasure, jarred upon its hair-fine sensibilities. And yet, behind all this, there was the tenacity of the great artist and the phenomenal power of endurance, in certain directions, which is essential to prize-winning in the fight for fame. There was the quality of nerve which can endure great tension in one way, but can bear nothing in other ways.

He went on, giving vent to all he felt, talking to himself rather than to Francesca. He could not

reproach his wife with any one action of importance. She was fond of Paul Griggs. But it was only Griggs! He smiled. In his eyes, the cold-faced man was no more than a stone. In their excursions into society she had met men whom he considered far more dangerous, men young, handsome, rich, having great names. They admired her and said so to her in the best language they had, which was no doubt often very eloquent. Had she ever looked twice at one of them? No. He could not reproach her with that. The Duchess of Astrardente was not more cold to her admirers than Gloria was. It was not that. There were little things, little nothings, but in thousands. He tried to please her with something, and she laughed in his face, or found fault. She had small hardnesses and little vulgarities of manner that drove him mad.

"I had thought her like you," he said suddenly, turning to Francesca. "She is not. She is coarse-grained. She has the soul of a peasant, with the face of a Madonna. What would you have? It is too much. Love is an illusion. I will have no more of it. Besides, love is dead. It would be easier to wake a corpse. I shall live. I may forget. Meanwhile there is our friendship. That is of gold."

Francesca listened in silence, thoughtful and with downcast eyes, as the short, disjointed sen-

tences broke vehemently from his lips, each one accusing her in her own heart of having wrought the misery of two lives, one of which was very dear to her. Too dear, as she knew at last. The scarlet shame would have burned her face, if she had owned to herself that she loved this man, whom she had married to another, believing that she was making his happiness. She would not own it. Had she admitted it then, she would have been capable of leaving him within the hour, and of shutting herself up forever in the Convent at Subiaco to expiate the sin of the thought. It was monstrous in her eyes, and she would still refuse to see it.

But she owned that there was the suspicion, and that Angelo Reanda was far dearer to her than anything else on earth. Her innocence was so strong and spotless that it had a right to its one and only satisfaction. But what she felt for Reanda was either love, or it was blasphemy against the holy thing in whose place he stood in her temple. It must not be love, and therefore, as anything else, it was too much. And the strange joy she felt because Gloria was nothing to him, still filled her heart, though it began to torment her with the knowledge of evil which she had never understood.

There was much else against him, too, in her pride of race, and it helped her just then, for it told her how impossible it was that she, a princess

of the house of Braccio, should love a mere artist, the son of a steward, whose forefathers had been bondsmen to her ancestors from time immemorial. It was out of the question, and she would not believe it of herself. Yet, as she looked into his delicate, spiritual face and watched the shades of expression that crossed it, she felt that it made little difference whence he came, since she understood him and he understood her.

She became confused by her own thoughts and grasped at the idea of a true and perfect friendship, with a somewhat desperate determination to see it and nothing else in it, for the rest of her life, rather than part with Angelo Reanda.

"Friends," she said thoughtfully. "Yes — always friends, you and I. But as a friend, Reanda, what can I do? I cannot help you."

"The time for help is past, if it ever came. You are a saint — pray for me. You can do that."

"But there is more than that to be done," she said, ready to sacrifice anything or everything just then. "Do not tell me it is hopeless. I will see your wife often and I will talk to her. I am older than she, and I can make her understand many things."

"Do not try it," said Reanda, in an altered tone. "I advise you not to try it. You can do no good there, and you might find trouble."

"Find trouble?" repeated Francesca, not under-

standing him. "What do you mean? Does she dislike me?"

"Have you not seen it?" he asked, with a bitter smile.

Francesca did not answer him at once, but bent her head again. Once or twice she looked up as though she were about to speak.

"It is as I tell you," said Reanda, nodding his head slowly.

Francesca made up her mind, but the scarlet blood rose in her face.

"It is better to be honest and frank," she said. "Is Gloria jealous of me?" She was so much ashamed that she could hardly look at him just then.

"Jealous! She would kill you!" he cried, and there was anger in his voice at the thought. "Do not go to her. Something might happen."

The blush in Francesca's face deepened and then subsided, and she grew very pale again.

"But if she is jealous, she loves you," she said earnestly and anxiously.

He shrugged his high thin shoulders, and the bitter smile came back to his face.

"It is a stage jealousy," he said cruelly. "How could she pass the time without something to divert her? She is always acting."

"But what is she jealous of?" asked Francesca. "How can she be jealous of me? Because you

work here? She is free to come if she likes, and to stay all day. I do not understand."

"Who can understand her? God, who made her, understands her. I am only a man. I know only one thing, that I loved her and do not love her. And she makes a scene for every day. One day it is you, and another day it is the walls she does not like. You will forgive me, Princess. I speak frankly what comes to my mouth from my heart. The whole story is this. She makes my life intolerable. I am not an idle man, the first you may meet in society, to spend my time from morning to night in studying my wife's caprices. I am an artist. When I have worked I must have peace. I do not ask for intelligent conversation like yours. But I must have peace. One of these days I shall strangle her with my hands. The Lord will forgive me and understand. I am full of nerves. Is it my fault? She twists them as the women wring out clothes at the fountain. It is not a life; it is a hell."

"Poor Reanda! Poor Reanda!" repeated Francesca, softly.

"I do not pity myself," he said scornfully. "I have deserved it, and much more. But I am human. If it goes on a little longer, you may take me to Santo Spirito, for I am going mad. At least I should be there in holy peace. After her, the madmen would all seem doctors of wisdom. Do

you know what will happen this evening? I go home. 'Where have you been?' she will ask. 'At the Palazzetto.' 'What have you been doing?' 'Painting — it is my trade.' 'Was Donna Francesca there?' 'Of course. She is mistress in her own house.' 'And what did you talk of?' 'How should I remember? We talked.' Then it will begin. It will be an inferno, as it always is. 'Leave hope behind, all ye that enter here!' I can say it, if ever man could! You are right to pity me. Before it is finished you will have reason to pity me still more. Let us hope it may finish soon. Either San Lorenzo, or Santo Spirito — with the mad or with the dead."

"Poor Reanda!"

"Yes — poor Reanda, if you like. People envy me, they say I am a great artist. If they think so, let them say it. It seems to them that I am somebody." He laughed, almost hysterically. "Somebody! Stuff for Santo Spirito! That is all she has left me in two years — not yet two years."

"Do not talk of Santo Spirito," said Francesca. "You shall not go mad. When you are unhappy, think of our friendship and of all the hours you have here every day." She hesitated and seemed to make an effort over herself. "But it is impossible that it should be all over, so hopelessly and so soon. She is nervous, perhaps. The climate does not suit her — "

Reanda laughed wildly, for he was rapidly losing all control of himself.

"Therefore I should take her away and go and live somewhere else!" he cried. "That would be the end! I should tear her to pieces with my hands —"

"Hush, hush! You are talking madly —"

"I know it. There is reason. It will end badly, one of these days, unless I end first, and that may happen also. Without you it would have happened long ago. You are the good angel in my life, the one friend God has sent me in my tormented existence, the one star in my black sky. Be my friend still, always, for ever and ever, and I shall live forever only to be your friend. As for love — the devil and his demons will know what to do with it — they will find their account in it. They have lent it, and they will take their payment in blood and tears of those who believe them."

"But there is love in the world, somewhere," said Francesca, gently.

"Yes — and in hell! But not in heaven — where you will be."

Francesca sighed unconsciously, and looked long away towards the great windows at the end of the hall. Reanda gathered up his palette and brushes with a steadier hand. His anger had not spent itself, but it made him suddenly strong, and the

outburst had relieved him, though it was certain that it would be followed by a reaction of profound despondency.

All at once he came close to Francesca. She looked up, half startled by his sudden movement.

"At least it is true — this one thing," he said. "I can count upon you."

"Yes. You can count upon me," she answered, gazing into his eyes.

He did not move. The one hand held his palette, the other hung free by his side. All at once she took it in hers, still looking up into his eyes.

"I am very fond of you," she said earnestly. "You can count upon me as long as we two live."

"God bless you," he said, more quietly than he had spoken yet, and his hand pressed hers a little.

There could be no harm in saying as much as that, she thought, when it was so true and so simply said. It was all she could ever say to him, or to herself, and there was no reason why she should not say it. He would not misunderstand her. No man could have mistaken the innocence that was the life and light of her clear eyes. She was glad she had said it, and she was glad long afterwards that she had said it on that day, quietly, when no one could hear them in the great still hall.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Reanda went home that evening in a very disturbed state of mind. He had been better so long as he had not given vent to what he felt; for, as with many southern men of excitable temper and weak nerves, his thoughts about himself, as distinguished from his pursuits, did not take positive shape in his mind until he had expressed them in words. Amongst the Latin races the phrase, 'he cannot think without speaking,' has more truth as applied to some individuals than the Anglo-Saxon can easily understand.

For many months the artist had been most unhappy. His silence concerning his grief had been almost exemplary, and had been broken only now and then by a hasty exclamation of annoyance when Gloria's behaviour had irritated him beyond measure. He was the gentlest of men; and even when he had lost his temper with her, he had never spoken roughly.

"You are hard to please, my dear," he had sometimes said.

But that had been almost the strongest expression of his displeasure. It was not, indeed, that

he had exercised very great self-control in the matter, for he had little power of that sort over himself. If he was habitually mild and gentle in his manner with Gloria, it was rather because, like many Italians, he dreaded emotion as something like an illness, and could avoid it to some extent merely by not speaking freely of what he felt. Silence was generally easy to him; and he had not broken out more than two or three times in all his life, as he had done on that afternoon alone with Francesca.

The inevitable consequence followed immediately, — a consequence as much physical as mental, for when he went away from the Palazzetto, his clear dark eyes were bloodshot and yellow, and his hands had trembled so that he had hardly been able to find the armholes of his great-coat in putting it on. He walked with an uncertain and agitated step, glancing to right and left of him as he went, half-fiercely, half-timidly, as though he expected a new adversary to spring upon him from every corner. The straight line of the houses waned and shivered in the dusk, as he looked at them, and he saw flashes of light in the air. His head was hot and aching, and his hat hurt him. Altogether he was in a dangerous state, not unlike that which, with northern men, sometimes follows hard drinking.

He hated to go home that evening. So far as he

was conscious, he had neither misrepresented nor in any way exaggerated the miseries of his domestic existence; and he felt that it was before him now, precisely as he had described it. There would be the same questions, to which he would give the same answers, at which Gloria would put on the same expression of injured hopelessness, unless she broke out and lost her temper, which happened often enough. The prospect was intolerable. Reanda thrust his hands deep into the pocket of his overcoat, and glared about him as he turned the corner of the Via degli Astalli, and saw the Corso in the distance. But he did not slacken his pace as he went along under the gloomy walls of the Austrian Embassy — the Palace of Venice — the most grim and fortress-like of all Roman palaces.

He felt as a poor man may feel when, hot and feverish from working by a furnace, he knows that he must face the winter storm of freezing sleet and piercing wind in his thin and ragged jacket to go home — a plunge, as it were, from molten iron into ice, with no protection from the cold. Every step of the homeward way was hateful to him. Yet he knew his own weakness well enough not to hesitate. Had he stopped, he might have been capable of turning in some other direction, and of spending the whole evening with some of his fellow-artists, going home late in the night, when

Gloria would be asleep. The thought crossed his mind. If he did that, he was sure to be carried away into speaking of his troubles to men with whom he had no intimacy. He was too proud for that. He wished he could go back to Francesca, and pour out his woes again. He had not said half enough. He should like to have it out, to the very end, and then lie down and close his eyes, and hear Francesca's voice soothing him and speaking of their golden friendship. But that was impossible, so he went home to face his misery as best he could.

There was exaggeration in all he thought, but there was none in the effect of his thoughts upon himself. He had married a woman unsuited to him in every way, as he was unsuited to her. The whole trouble lay there. Possibly he was not a man to marry at all, and should have led his solitary life to the end, illuminated from the outside, as it were, by Francesca Campodonico's faithful friendship and sweet influence. All causes of disagreement, considered as forces in married life, are relative in their value to the comparative solidity of the characters on which they act — a truism which ought to be the foundation of social charity, but is not. Reanda could not be blamed for his brittle sensitivenesses, nor Gloria for a certain coarse-grained streak of cruelty, which she had inherited from her father, and which had combined

strangely with the rare gifts and great faults of her dead mother — the love of emotion for its own sake, and the tendency to do everything which might produce it in herself and those about her. Emotion was poison to Reanda. It was his wife's favourite food.

He reached his home, and went up the well-lighted marble staircase, wishing that he were ascending the narrow stone steps at the back of the Palazzetto Borgia, taper in hand, to his old bachelor quarters, to light his lamp, to smoke in peace, and to spend the evening over a sketch, or with a book, or dreaming of work not yet done. He paused on the landing, before he rang the bell of his apartment. The polished door irritated him, with its brass fittings and all that it meant of married life and irksome social obligation. He never carried a key, because the Roman keys of those times were large and heavy; but he had been obliged to use one formerly, when he had lived by himself. The necessity of ringing the bell irritated him again, and he felt a nervous shock of unwillingness as he pulled the brass knob. He set his teeth against the tinkling and jangling that followed, and his eyelids quivered. Everything hurt him. He did not feel sure of his hands when he wanted to use them. He was inclined to strike the silent and respectful man-servant who opened the door, merely because he was silent and respectful. He

went straight to his own dressing-room, and shut himself in. It would be a relief to change his clothes. He and Gloria were to go to a reception in the evening, and he would dress at once. In those days few Romans dressed for dinner every day.

He dropped a stud, for his hands were shaking so that he could hardly hold anything; and he groped for the thing on his knees. The blood went to his head, and hurt him violently, as though he had received a blow.

Gloria's room was next to his, and she heard him moving about. She knocked and tried the door, but it was locked; and she heard him utter an exclamation of annoyance, as he hunted for the stud. She thought it was meant for her, and turned angrily back from the door. On any other day he would have called her, for he had heard her trying to get in. But he shrugged his lean shoulders impatiently, glanced once towards her room, found his stud, and went on dressing.

He really made an effort to get control of himself while he was alone. But to all intents and purposes he was actually ill. His face was drawn and sallow; his eyes were yellow and bloodshot; and there were deep, twitching lines about his mouth. His nostrils moved spasmodically when he drew breath, and his long thin hands fumbled helplessly at the studs and buttons of his clothes.

At last he was dressed, and went into the drawing-room. Gloria was already there, waiting by the fireside, with an injured and forbidding expression in her beautiful face.

Reanda came to the fireside, and stood there, spreading out his trembling hands to the blaze. He dreaded the first word, as a man lying ill of brain fever dreads each cracking explosion in a thunderstorm. Strained as their relations had been for a long time, he had never failed to kiss Gloria when he came home. This evening he barely glanced at her, and stood watching the dancing tongues of the wood fire, not daring to think of the sound of his wife's voice. It came at last cool and displeased.

"Are you ill?" she asked, looking steadily at him.

"No," he answered with an effort, and his outstretched hands shook before the fire.

"Then what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing." He did not even turn his eyes to her, as he spoke the single word.

A silence followed, during which he suffered. Nevertheless, the first dreaded shock of hearing her voice was over. Though he had barely glanced at her, he had known from her face what the sound of the voice would be.

Gloria leaned back in her chair and watched the fire, and sighed. Griggs had been with her

in the afternoon, and she had been happy, quite innocently, as she thought. The man's dominating strength and profound earnestness, which would have been intolerably dull to many women, smoothed Gloria, as it were. She said that he ironed the creases out of her life for her. It was not a softening influence, but a calming one, bred of strength pressing heavily on caprice. She resisted it, but took pleasure in finding that it was irresistible. Now and then it was not merely a steady pressure. He had a sledge hammer amongst his intellectual weapons, and once in a while it fell upon one of her illusions. She laughed at the destruction, and had no pity for the fragments. They were not illusions integral with her vanity, for he thought her perfect, and he would not have struck at her faults if he had seen them. Her faults grew, for they had root in her vital nature, and drew nourishment from his enduring strength, which surrounded them and protected them in the blind, whole-heartedness of his love. For the rest, he had kept his word. She had seen him turn white and bite his lip, sometimes, and more than once he had left her abruptly, and had not come back again for several days. But he had never forgotten his promise, in any word or deed since he had given it.

It is a dangerous thing to pile up a mountain of massive reality from which to look out upon the

fading beauty of a fleeting illusion. In his influence on Gloria's life, the strong man had overtopped the man of genius by head and shoulders. And she loved the strange mixture of attraction and repulsion she felt when she was with Griggs — the something that wounded her vanity because she could not understand it, and the protecting shield that overspread that same vanity, and gave it freedom to be vain beyond all bounds. She would not have admitted that she loved the man. It was her nature to play upon his pity with the wounds her love for her husband had suffered. Yet she knew that if she were free she should marry him, because she could not resist him, and there was pleasure in the idea that she controlled so irresistible a force. The contrast between him and Reanda was ever before her, and since she had learned how weak genius could be, the comparison was enormously in favour of the younger man.

As Reanda stood there before the fire that evening, she despised him, and her heart rebelled against his nature. His nervousness, his trembling hands, his almost evident fear of being questioned, were contemptible. He was like a hunted animal, she thought. Two hours earlier her friend had stood there, solid, leonine, gladiatorial, dominating her with his square white face, and still, shadowy eyes, quietly stretching to the flames two

hands that could have torn her in pieces, — a man imposing in his stern young sadness, almost solemn in his splendid physical dignity.

She looked at Reanda, and her lip curled with scorn of herself for having loved such a thing. It was long since she had seen the gentle light in his face which had won her heart two years ago. She was familiar with his genius, and it no longer surprised her into overlooking his frailty. His fame no longer flattered her. His gentleness was gone, and had left, not hardness nor violence, in its place, but a sort of irritable palsy of discontent. That was what she called it as she watched him.

"You used to kiss me when you came home," she said suddenly, leaning far back in her chair.

Mechanically he turned his head. The habit was strong, and she had reminded him of it. He did not wish to quarrel, and he did not reason. He moved a step to her side and bent down to kiss her forehead. The automatic conjugality of the daily kiss might have a good effect. That was what he thought, if he thought at all.

But she put up her hands suddenly, and thrust him back rudely.

"No," she said. "That sort of thing is not worth much, if I have to remind you to do it."

Her lip curled again. His high shoulders went up, and he turned away.

"You are hard to please," he said, and the words

were as mechanical as the action that had preceded them.

"It cannot be said that you have taken much pains to please me of late," she answered coldly.

The servant announced dinner at that moment, and Reanda made no answer, though he glanced at her nervously. They went into the dining-room and sat down.

The storm brewed during the silent meal. Reanda scarcely ate anything, and drank a little weak wine and water.

"You hardly seem well enough to go out this evening," said Gloria, at last, but there was no kindness in the tone.

"I am perfectly well," he answered impatiently. "I will go with you."

"There is not the slightest necessity," replied his wife. "I can go alone, and you can go to bed."

"I tell you I am perfectly well!" he said with unconcealed annoyance. "Let me alone."

"Certainly. Nothing is easier."

The voice was full of that injured dignity which most surely irritated him, as Gloria knew. But the servant was in the room, and he said nothing, though it was a real effort to be silent. His tongue had been free that day, and it was hard to be bound again.

They finished dinner almost in silence, and then

went back to the drawing-room by force of habit. Gloria was still in her walking-dress, but there was no hurry, and she resumed her favourite seat by the fire for a time, before going to dress for the reception.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

There was something exasperating in the renewal of the position exactly as it had been before dinner. To make up for having eaten nothing, Reanda drank two cups of coffee in silence.

"You might at least speak to me," observed Gloria, as he set down the second cup. "One would almost think that we had quarrelled!"

The hard laugh that followed the words jarred upon him more painfully than anything that had gone before. He laughed, too, after a moment's silence, half hysterically.

"Yes," he said; "one might almost think that we had quarrelled!" And he laughed again.

"The idea seems to amuse you," said Gloria, coldly.

"As it does you," he answered. "We both laughed. Indeed, it is very amusing."

"Donna Francesca has sent you home in a good humour. That is rare. I suppose I ought to be grateful."

"Yes. I am in a fine humour. It seems to me that we both are." He bit his cigar, and blew out short puffs.

"You need not include me. Please do not smoke into my face."

The smoke was not very near her, but she made a movement with her hands as though brushing it away.

"I beg your pardon," he said politely, and he moved to the other side of the fireplace.

"How nervous you are!" she exclaimed. "Why can you not sit down?"

"Because I wish to stand," he answered, with returning impatience. "Because I am nervous, if you choose."

"You told me that you were perfectly well."

"So I am."

"If you were perfectly well, you would not be nervous," she replied.

He felt as though she were driving a sharp nail into his brain.

"It does not make any difference to you whether I am nervous or not," he said, and his eye began to lighten, as he sat down.

"It certainly makes no difference to you whether you are rude or not."

He shrugged his shoulders, said nothing, and smoked in silence. One thin leg was crossed over the other and swung restlessly.

"Is this sort of thing to last forever?" she inquired coldly, after a silence which had lasted a full minute.

"I do not know what you mean," said Reanda.

"You know very well what I mean."

"This is insufferable!" he exclaimed, rising suddenly, with his cigar between his teeth.

"You might take your cigar out of your mouth to say so," retorted Gloria.

He turned on her, and an exclamation of anger was on his lips, but he did not utter it. There was a remnant of self-control. Gloria leaned back in her chair, and took up a carved ivory fan from amongst the knick-knacks on the little table beside her. She opened it, shut it, and opened it again, and pretended to fan herself, though the room was cool.

"I should really like to know," she said presently, as he walked up and down with uneven steps.

"What?" he asked sharply.

"Whether this is to last for the rest of our lives."

"What?"

"This peaceful existence," she said scornfully. "I should really like to know whether it is to last. Could you not tell me?"

"It will not last long, if you make it your principal business to torment me," he said, stopping in his walk.

"I?" she exclaimed, with an air of the utmost surprise. "When do I ever torment you?"

"Whenever I am with you, and you know it."

"Really! You must be ill, or out of your mind.

or both. That would be some excuse for saying such a thing."

"It needs none. It is true." He was becoming exasperated at last. "You seem to spend your time in finding out how to make life intolerable. You are driving me mad. I cannot bear it much longer."

"If it comes to bearing, I think I have borne more than you," said Gloria. "It is not little. You leave me to myself. You neglect me. You abuse the friends I am obliged to find rather than be alone. You neglect me in every way — and you say that I am driving you mad. Do you realize at all how you have changed in this last year? You may have really gone mad, for all I know, but it is I who have to suffer and bear the consequences. You neglect me brutally. How do I know how you pass your time?"

Reanda stood still in the middle of the room, gazing at her. For a moment he was surprised by the outbreak. She did not give him time to answer.

"You leave me in the morning," she went on, working her coldness into anger. "You often go away before I am awake. You come back at midday, and sometimes you do not speak a word over your breakfast. If I speak, you either do not answer, or you find fault with what I say; and if I show the least enthusiasm for anything but your work, you preach me down with proverbs and

maxims, as though I were a child. I am foolish, young, impatient, silly, not fit to take care of myself, you say! Have you taken care of me? Have you ever sacrificed one hour out of your long day to give me a little pleasure? Have you ever once, since we were married, stayed at home one morning and asked me what I would do — just to make one holiday for me? Never. Never once! You give me a fine house and enough money, and you think you have given me all that a woman wants."

"And what do you want?" asked Reanda, trying to speak calmly.

"A little kindness, a little love — the least thing of all you promised me and of all I was so sure of having! Is it so much to ask? Have you lied to me all this time? Did you never love me? Did you marry me for my face, or for my voice? Was it all a mere empty sham from the beginning? Have you deceived me from the first? You said you loved me. Was none of it true?"

"Yes. I loved you," he answered, and suddenly there was a dulness in his voice.

"You loved me — "

She sighed, and in the stillness that followed the little ivory fan rattled as she opened and shut it. To his ear, the tone in which she had spoken had rung false. If only he could have heard her voice speaking as it had once sounded, he must have been touched.

"Yes," she continued. "You loved me, or at least you made me think you did. I was young and I believed you. You do not even say it now. Perhaps because you know how hard it would be to make me believe you."

"No. That is not the reason."

She waited a moment, for it was not the answer she had expected.

"Angelo —" she began, and waited, but he said nothing, though he looked at her. "It is not true, it cannot be true!" she said, suddenly turning her face away, for there was a bitter humiliation in it.

"It is much better to say it at once," he said, with the supernaturally calm indifference which sometimes comes upon very sensitive people when they are irritated beyond endurance. "I did love you, or I should not have married you. But I do not love you any longer. I am sorry. I wish I did."

"And you dare to tell me so!" she cried, turning upon him suddenly.

A moment later she was leaning forward, covering her face with her hands, and speaking through them.

"You have the heart to tell me so, after all I have been to you — the devotion of years, the tenderness, the love no man ever had of any woman! Oh, God! It is too much!"

"It is said now. It is of no use to go back to a

lie," observed Reanda, with an indifference that would have seemed diabolical even to himself, had he believed her outbreak to be quite genuine. "Of what use would it be to pretend again?"

"You admit that you have only pretended to love me?" She raised her flushed face and gleaming eyes.

"Of late — if you call it a pretence — "

"Oh, not that — not that! I have seen it — but at first. You did love me. Say that, at least."

"Certainly. Why should I have married you?"

"Yes — why? In spite of her, too — it is not to be believed."

"In spite of her? Of whom? Are you out of your mind?"

Gloria laughed in a despairing sort of way.

"Do not tell me that Donna Francesca ever wished you to be married!" she said.

"She brought us together. You know it. It is the only thing I could ever reproach her with."

"She made you marry me?"

"Made me? No! You are quite mad."

He stamped his foot impatiently, and turned away to walk up and down again. His cigar had gone out, but he gnawed at it angrily. He was amazed at what he could still bear, but he was fast losing his head. The mad desire to strangle her tingled in his hands, and the light of the lamp danced when he looked at it.

"She has made you do so many things!" said Gloria.

Her tone had changed again, growing hard and scornful, when she spoke of Donna Francesca.

"What has she made me do that you should speak of her in that way?" asked Reanda, angrily, recrossing the room.

"She has made you hate me — for one thing," Gloria answered.

"That is not true!" Reanda could hardly breathe, and he felt his voice growing thick.

"Not true! Then, if not she, who else? You are with her there all day — she talks about me, she finds fault with me, and you come home and see the faults she finds for you — "

"There is not a word of truth in what you say — "

"Do not be so angry, then! If it were not true, why should you care? I have said it, and I will say it. She has robbed me of you. Oh, I will never forgive her! Never fear! One does not forget such things! She has got you, and she will keep you, I suppose. But you shall regret it! She shall pay me for it!"

Her voice shook, for her jealousy was real, as was all her emotion while it lasted.

"You shall not speak of her in that way," said Reanda, fiercely. "I owe her and her family all that I am, all that I have in the world — "

"Including me!" interrupted Gloria. "Pay her then — pay her with your love and yourself. You can satisfy your conscience in that way, and you can break my heart."

"There is not the slightest fear of that," answered Reanda, cruelly.

She rose suddenly to her feet and stood before him, blazing with anger.

"If I could find yours — if you had any—I would break it," she said. "You dare to say that I have no heart, when you can see that every word you say thrusts it through like a knife, when I have loved you as no woman ever loved man! I said it, and I repeat it — when I have given you everything, and would have given you the world if I had it! Indeed, you are utterly heartless and cruel and unkind — "

"At least, I am honest. I do not play a part as you do. I say plainly that I do not love you and that I am sorry for it. Yes — really sorry." His voice softened for an instant. "I would give a great deal to love you as I once did, and to believe that you loved me — "

"You will tell me that I do not — "

"Indeed, I will tell you so, and that you never did — "

"Angelo — take care! You will go too far!"

"I could never go far enough in telling you that truth. You never loved me. You may have

thought you did. I do not care. You talk of devotion and tenderness and all the like! Of being left alone and neglected! Of going too far! What devotion have you ever shown to me, beyond extravagantly praising everything I painted, for a few months after we were married. Then you grew tired of my work. That is your affair. What is it to me whether you admire my pictures or Mendoza's, or any other man's? Do you think that is devotion? I know far better than you which are good and which are bad. But you call it devotion. And it was devotion that kept you away from me when I was working, when I was obliged to work — for it is my trade, after all — and when you might have been with me day after day! And it was devotion to meet me with your sour, severe look every day when I came home, as though I were a secret enemy, a conspirator, a creature to be guarded against like a thief — as though I had been staying away from you on purpose, and of my will — instead of working for you all day long. That was your way of showing your love. And to torment me with questions, everlastingly believing that I spend my time in talking against you to Donna Francesca — "

"You do!" cried Gloria, who had not been able to interrupt his incoherent speech. "You love her as you never loved me — as you hate me — as you both hate me!"

She grasped his sleeve in her anger, shaking his arm, and staring into his eyes.

"You make me hate you!" he answered, trying to shake her off.

"And you succeed, between you — You and your —"

In his turn he grasped her arm with his long, thin fingers, with nervous roughness.

"You shall not speak of her —"

"Shall not? It is the only right I have left — that and the right to hate you — you and that infamous woman you love — yes — you and your mistress — your pretty Francesca!" Her laugh was almost a scream.

His fury overflowed. After all, he was the son of a countryman, of the steward of Gerano. He snatched the ivory fan from her hand and struck her across the face with it. The fragile thing broke to shivers, and the fragments fell between them.

Gloria turned deadly white, but there was a bright red bar across her cheek. She looked at him a moment, and into her face there came that fateful look that was like her dead mother's.

Then without a word she turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The daughter of Angus Dalrymple and Maria Braccio was not the woman to bear a blow tamely, or to hesitate long as to the surest way of resenting it. Before she had reached the door she had determined to leave the house at once, and ten minutes had not passed before she found herself walking down the Corso, veiled and muffled in a cloak, and having all the money she could call her own, in her pocket, together with a few jewels of little value, given her by her father.

Reanda had sunk into a chair when the door had closed behind her, half stunned by the explosion of his own anger. He looked at the bits of broken ivory on the carpet, and wondered vaguely what they meant. He felt as though he had been in a dream of which he could not remember the distorted incidents at all clearly. His breath came irregularly, his heart fluttered and stood still and fluttered again, and his hands twitched at the fringe on the arms of the chair. By and bye, the butler came in to take away the coffee cups and he saw that his master was ill. Under such circumstances nothing can equal the gentleness of an

Italian servant. The man called some one to help him, and got Reanda to his dressing-room, and undressed him and laid him upon the long leathern sofa. Then they knocked at the bedroom door, but there was no answer.

"Do not disturb the signora," said Reanda, feebly. "She wishes to be alone. We shall not want the carriage."

Those were the only words he spoke that evening, and the servants understood well enough that something had happened between husband and wife, and that it was best to be silent and to obey. No one tried the door of the bedroom. If any one had turned the handle, it would have been found to be locked. The key lay on the table in the hall, amongst the visiting-cards. Dalrymple's daughter had inherited some of his quick instinct and presence of mind. She had felt sure that if she locked the door of her room when she left the house, her husband would naturally suppose that she had shut herself in, not wishing to be disturbed, and would respect her desire to be alone. It would save trouble, and give her time to get away. He could sleep on the sofa in his dressing-room, as he actually did, in the illness of his anger, treated as Italians know how to treat such common cases, of which the consequences are sometimes fatal. Many an Italian has died from a fit of rage. A single blood-vessel, in the brain, a little weaker

than the rest, and all is over in an apoplexy. But Reanda was not of an apoplectic constitution. The calming treatment acted very soon, he fell asleep, and did not wake till daylight, quite unaware that Gloria was not in the next room, sleeping off her anger as he had done.

She had gone out in her first impulse to leave the house of the man who had so terribly insulted her. Under her veil the hot blood scorched her where the blow had left its red bar, and her rage and wounded pride chased one another from her heart to her head while with every beating of her pulse the longing for revenge grew wilder and stronger.

She had left the house with one first idea — to find Paul Griggs and tell him what had happened. No other thought crossed her mind, and her steps turned mechanically down the Corso, for he still lived in his two rooms in the Via della Frezza.

It was early still. People dined at six o'clock in those days, and it was not yet eight when Gloria found herself in the street. It was quiet, though there were many people moving about. During the hours between dinner and the theatre there were hardly any carriages out, and the sound of many footsteps and of many low voices filled the air. Gloria kept to the right and walked swiftly along, never turning her head. She had never been out in the streets alone at night in her life, and even in her anger she felt a sort of intoxication of free-

dom that was quite new to her, a beginning of satisfaction upon him who had injured her. There was Highland blood in her veins, as well as Italian passion.

The southeast wind was blowing down the street behind her, that same strange and tragic wind, tragic and passionate, that had blown so gustily down upon Subiaco from the mountains, on that night long ago when Maria Addolorata had stood aside by the garden gate to let Dalrymple pass, bearing something in his arms. Gloria knew it by its sad whisper and by the faint taste of it and smell of it, through her close-drawn veil.

On she went, down the Corso, till she came to the Piazza Colonna, and saw far on her left, beyond the huge black shaft of the column, the brilliant lights from the French officers' Club. She hesitated then, and slackened her speed a little. The sight of the Club reminded her of society, of what she was doing, and of what it might mean. As she walked more slowly, the wind gained upon her, as it were, from behind, and tried to drive her on. It seemed to be driving her from her husband's house with all its might, blowing her skirts before her and her thick veil. She passed the square, keeping close to the shutters of the shops under the Palazzo Piombino — gone now, to widen the open space. A gust, stronger than any she had felt yet, swept down the pavement. She paused a moment,

leaning against the closed shutters of the clock-maker Ricci, whose shop used to be a sort of land-mark in the Corso. Just then a clock within struck eight strokes. She heard them all distinctly through the shutters.

She hesitated an instant. It was eight o'clock. She had not realized what time it was. If she found the street door shut in the Via della Frezza, it would be hard to get at Griggs. She had passed the house more than once in her walks, and she knew that Griggs lived high up in the fifth story. It might be already too late. She hesitated and looked up and down the pavement. A young French officer of Zouaves was coming towards her; his high wrinkled and varnished boots gleamed in the gaslight. He had a black beard and bright young eyes, and was smoking a cigarette. He was looking at her and slackened his pace as he came near. She left her place and walked swiftly past him, down the Corso.

All at once she felt in the gust that drove her a cool drop of rain just behind her ear, and a moment later, passing a gas-lamp, she saw the dark round spots on the grey pavement. In her haste, she had brought no umbrella. She hurried on, and the wind blew her forward with all its might, so that she felt her steps lightened by its help. The Corso was darker and there were fewer people. The rain fell fast when she reached San Carlo, where the

street widens, and she gathered her cloak about her as well as she could and crossed to the other side, hoping to find more shelter. She was nearing the Via della Frezza, and she knew some of the ins and outs of the narrow streets behind the tribune of the great church. It was very dark as she turned the semicircle of the apse, and the rain fell in torrents, but it was shorter to go that way, for Griggs lived nearer to the Ripetta than to the Corso, and she followed a sort of crooked diagonal, in the direction of his house. She thought the streets led by that way to the point she wished to reach, and she walked as fast as she could. The flare of an occasional oil lamp swung out high at the end of its lever showed her the way, and showed her, too, the rush of the yellow water down the middle channel of the street. She looked in vain for the turning she expected on her right. She had not lost her way, but she had not found the short cut she had looked for. Emerging upon the broad Ripetta, she paused an instant at the corner and looked about, though she knew which way to turn. Just then there were heavy splashing footsteps close to her.

"Permit me, Signora," said a voice that was rough and had an odd accent, though the tone was polite, and a huge umbrella was held over her head.

She shrank back against the wall quickly, in womanly fear of a strange man.

"No, thank you!" she exclaimed in answer.

"But yes!" said the man. "It rains. You are getting an illness, Signora."

The faint light showed her that she would be safe enough in accepting the offer. The man was evidently a peasant from the mountains, and he was certainly not young. His vast black cloak was turned back a little by his arm and showed the lining of green flannel and the blue clothes with broad silver buttons which he wore.

"Thank you," she said, for she was glad of the shelter, and she stood still under the enormous blue cotton umbrella, with its battered brass knob and its coloured stripes.

"But I will accompany you," said the man. "It is certainly not beginning to finish. Apoplexy! It rains in pieces!"

"Thank you. I am not going far," said Gloria. "You are very kind."

"It seems to be the act of a Christian," observed the peasant.

She began to move, and he walked beside her. He would have thought it bad manners to ask whither she was going. Through the torrents of rain they went on in silence. In less than five minutes she had found the door of Griggs's house. To her intense relief it was still open, and there was the glimmer of a tiny oil lamp from a lantern in the stairway. Gloria felt for the money in her

pocket. The man did not wait, nor speak, and was already going away. She called him.

"I wish to give you something," said Gloria.

"To me?" exclaimed the man, in surprise. "No, Signora. It seems that you make a mistake."

"Excuse me," Gloria answered. "In the dark, I did not see. I am very grateful to you. You are from the country?"

She wished to repair the mistake she had made, by some little civility. The man stood on the doorstep, with his umbrella hanging backward over his shoulder, and she could see his face distinctly, — a typical Roman face with small aquiline features, keen dark eyes, a square jaw, and iron-grey hair.

"Yes, Signora. Stefanone of Subiaco, wine merchant, to serve you. If you wish wine of Subiaco, ask for me at Piazza Montanara. Signora, it rains columns. With permission, I go."

"Thank you again," she answered.

He disappeared into the torrent, and she was left alone at the foot of the gloomy stairs, under the feeble light of the little oil lamp. She had thrown back her veil, for it was soaked with water and stuck to her face. Little rivulets ran down upon the stones from her wet clothes, which felt intolerably heavy as she stood there, resting one gloved hand against the damp wall and staring at

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the lantern. Her thoughts had been disturbed by her brief interview with the peasant; the rain chilled her, and her face burned. She touched her cheek with her hand where Reanda had struck her. It felt bruised and sore, for the blow had not been a light one. The sensation of the wet leather disgusted her, and she drew off the glove with difficulty, turning it inside out over her full white hand. Then she touched the place again, and patted it, softly, and felt it. But her eyes did not move from the lantern.

There was one of those momentary lulling pauses in the rush of events which seem sent to confuse men's thoughts and unsettle their purposes. Had she reached the house five minutes earlier, she would not have hesitated a moment at the foot of the stairs. Suddenly she turned back to the door, and stood there looking out. It looked very black. She gathered her dripping skirt back as she bent forward a little and peered into the darkness. The rain fell in sheets, now, with the unquavering sound of a steadily rushing torrent. It would be madness to go out into it. A shiver ran through her, and another. She was very cold and miserable. No doubt Griggs had a fire upstairs, and a pleasant light in his study. He would be there, hard at work. She would knock, and he would open, and she would sit down by the fire and dry herself, and pour out her misery. The red bar was

still across her face — she had seen it in the looking-glass when she had put on her hat.

To go back, to see her husband that night — it was impossible. Later, perhaps, when he should be asleep, Griggs would find a carriage and take her home. No one would ever know where she had been, and she would never tell any more than Griggs would. She felt that she must see him and tell him everything, and feel his strength beside her. After all, he was the only friend she had in the world, and it was natural that she should turn to him for help, in her father's absence. He was her father's friend, too.

She shivered again and again from head to foot, and she drew back from the door. For a moment she hesitated. Then with a womanly action she began to shake the rain out of her cloak and her skirts as well as she could, wetting her hands to the wrists. As she bent down, shaking the hem of the skirt, the blood rushed to her face again, and the place he had struck burned and smarted. It was quite a different sensation from what she had felt when she had touched it with her cool wet hand. She straightened herself with a spring and threw back her head, and her eyes flashed fiercely in the dark. The accidents of fate closed round her, and the hands of her destiny had her by the throat, choking her as she breathed.

There was no more hesitation. With quick steps

she began to ascend the short, steep flights. It was dark, beyond the first turning, but she went on, touching the damp walls with her hands. Then there was a glimmer again, and a second lantern marked the first landing and shone feebly upon a green door with a thin little square of white marble screwed to it for a door-plate and a name in black. She glanced at it and went on, for she knew that Griggs lived on the fifth floor. She was sure-footed, like her father, as she went firmly up, panting a little, for her drenched clothes weighed her down. There was one more light, and then there were no more. She counted the landings, feeling the doors with her hands as she went by, dizzy from the constant turning in the darkness. At last she thought she had got to the end, and groping with her hands she found a worsted string and pulled it, and a cracked little bell jangled and beat against the wood inside. She heard a pattering of feet, and a shrill, nasal child's voice called out the customary question, inquiring who was there. She asked for Griggs.

"He is not here," answered the child, and she heard the footsteps running away again, though she called loudly.

Her heart sank. But she groped her way on. The staircase ended, for it was the top of the house, and she found another door, and felt for a string like the one she had pulled, but there was none.

Something told her that she was right, and with the sudden, desperate longing to be inside, with her strong protector, in the light and warmth, she beat upon the door with the palms of her hands, her face almost touching the cold painted wood studded with nails, that smelled of wet iron.

Then came the firm, regular footsteps of the strong man, and his clear, stern voice spoke from within, not in a question, but in a curt refusal to open.

"Go away," he said, in Italian. "You have mistaken the door."

But she beat with her hands upon the heavy wood.

"Let me in!" she cried in English. "Let me in!"

There was a deep exclamation of surprise, and the oiled bolt clanked back in its socket. The door opened inward, and Paul Griggs held up a lamp with a green shade, throwing the light into Gloria's face.

CHAPTER XXX.

Gloria pushed past Griggs and stood beside him in the narrow entry. He shut the door mechanically, and turned slowly towards her, still holding up the lamp so that it shone upon her face.

"What has happened to you?" he asked, slowly and steadily, his shadowed eyes fixed upon her.

"He has beaten me, and I have come to you. Look at my face."

He saw the red bar across her cheek. He did not raise his voice, and there was little change in his features, but his eyes glowed suddenly, like the eyes of a wild beast, and he swore an oath so terrible that Gloria turned a little pale and shrank from him. Then he was silent, and they stood together. She could hear his breath. She could see him trying to swallow, for his throat was suddenly as dry as cinders. Very slowly his frown deepened to a scowl, and two straight furrows clove their way down between his eyes, his dark eyebrows were lifted evilly, upward and outward, and little by little the strong, clean shaven upper lip rose at the corners and showed two gleaming, wolfish teeth. The smooth, close hair bristled from the point where it descended upon his forehead.

Gloria shrank a little. She had seen such a look in an angry lion; just the look, without a motion of the limbs. Then it all disappeared, and the still face she knew so well was turned to hers.

"Will you come in?" he asked in a constrained tone. "It is my work-room. I will light a fire, and you must dry yourself. How did you get so wet? You did not come on foot?"

He opened the door while he was speaking, and led the way with the lamp. Gloria shivered as she followed, for there was a small window open in the entry, and her clothes clung to her in the cold draught. She closed the door behind her, as she went in. It was very little warmer within than without, and the small fireplace was black and cold. Instinctively she glanced at Griggs. He wore a rough pilot coat that had seen much service, buttoned to his throat. He set the little lamp with its green shade down upon the table amidst a mass of papers and books, and drew forward the only easy-chair there was, a dilapidated piece of furniture covered with faded yellow reps and ragged fringes that dragged on the floor. He took a great cloak from a clothes-horse in the corner and threw it over the chair, smoothing it carefully with his hands.

"If you will sit down, I will try and make a fire," he said quietly.

She sat down as he bade her, wondering a little at his calmness, but remembering the awful words that had escaped his lips when she had spoken, and the look of the wild beast and incarnate devil that had been one moment in his face. She looked about her while he began to make a fire, not hindering him, for she was shivering. The room was large, but very poorly furnished. There were two great tables, covered with books and papers; there was a deal bookcase along one wall and an antiquated cabinet between the two windows, one of its legs propped up with a dingy faded paper. The coarse green carpet was threadbare, but still whole. There were half-a-dozen plain chairs with green and white rush seats in various parts of the room. On the narrow white marble mantel-shelf stood two china candlesticks, in one of which there was a piece of candle that had guttered when last burning. In the middle a cheap American clock of white metal ticked loudly, and the hands pointed to twenty minutes before nine. In one corner was the clothes-horse, with two or three overcoats hanging on it, and two hats, one of which was hanging half over on one side. It looked as though two cloaked skeletons in hats were embracing. In another corner by the door a black stick and an umbrella stood side by side. But for the books the place would have had a desolate look. The air smelt of strong tobacco.

Gloria looked about her curiously, though her heart was beating fast. The man was familiar to her, dear to her in many ways, and over much in her life. The place where he lived contained a part of him which she did not know. Her breath came quickly in the anticipation of an emotion greater even than what she had felt already, but her eyes wandered in curiosity from one object to another. Suddenly she heard the loud cracking of breaking wood. There was a blaze of paper from the fireplace, illuminating all the room, and some light pieces he was throwing on kindled quickly. He was breaking them — she looked — it was one of the rush-bottomed chairs.

"What are you doing?" she cried, leaning suddenly far forward.

"Making a good fire," he answered. "There happened to be only one bit of wood in my box, so I am taking these things."

He broke the legs and the rails of the chair in his hands, as a child would break twigs, and heaped them up upon the blaze.

"There are five more," he observed. "They will make a good fire."

He arranged the burning mass to suit him, looked at it, and then turned.

"You ought to be a little nearer," he said, and he lifted the chair with her in it and set her before the fireplace.

It had all looked and felt desperately desolate half a minute earlier. It was changed now. He went to a corner and filled a small glass with wine from a straw-covered flask and brought it to her. She thanked him with her eyes and drank half of it eagerly. He knelt down before the fire again, for as the paper burned away underneath, the light sticks fell inward and might go out. When he had arranged it all again, he looked round and met her eyes, still kneeling.

"Is that better?" he asked quietly.

"You are so good," said Gloria, letting her eyelids droop as she looked from him to the pleasant flame.

He put out his hand and gently touched the hem of her cloth skirt.

"You are drenched," he said.

Then, before she realized what he was doing, he bent down and kissed the wet cloth, and without looking at her rose to his feet, got another chair and sat down near her. A soft blush of pleasure had risen in her cheeks. They were little things that he did, but they were like him, unaffected, strong, direct. Another man would have made apologies for having no wood and would have tried to make a fire of the single stick. Another man would have made excuses for the disorder of his room, or for the poverty of its furniture, perhaps. The other man she thought of was her husband,

and possibly she had her father in her mind, too.

"When you are rested, tell me your story," he said, and his face hardened all at once.

She began to speak in a low and uncertain voice, reciting almost mechanically many things which she had often told him before. He listened without moving a muscle. Her voice was dear to him, whether she repeated the endless history of her woes for the tenth or the hundredth time. Where she was concerned he had no judgment, and he had no criterion, for he had never loved another woman with whom he could compare her. All that was of her was of paramount interest and weighty importance. He could not hear it too often. But to-night her first words had told him of the violent crisis in her life with Reanda, and he listened to all she said, before she reached that point, with an interest he had never felt before. But he would not look at her, for he must have taken her in his arms, as he had done once, months before now. She had come for protection and for help, and her need was the life spring of his honour.

As she went on, her voice took colour from her emotion, her hands moved now and then in short swift gestures, and her dark eyes burned. The marvellous dramatic power she possessed blazed out under the lash of her wrongs, and she found words she had only groped for until that moment.

She described the miserably nervous feebleness of the man with scathing contempt, her tone made evil deeds of his shortcomings, her scorn made his weakness a black crime; her jealous anger fastened upon Francesca Campodonico and tore her honour to shreds and her virtues to rags of abomination; and her flaming pride blazed out in searing hatred and contempt for the coward who had struck her in the face.

"He broke my fan across my face!" she cried with the ascending intonation of a fury rising still, and still more fiercely beautiful. "He slashed my face with it and broke it and threw the bits down at my feet! There, look at it! That is his work — oh, give it back to him, kill him for me, tear him to pieces for me — make him feel what I have felt to-day!"

She had pushed her brown hat and veil back from her head, and her wet cloak had long ago fallen from her shoulders. One straight, white hand shot out and fastened upon her companion's arm, as he sat beside her, and she shook it in savage confidence of his iron strength.

A dead silence followed, but the fire made of the broken chairs roared and blazed on the low brick hearth. The man kept his eyes upon it fixedly, as though it were his salvation, for he felt that if he looked at her he was lost. She had come to him not for love, but for protection, of her own free

will. Yet he felt that his honour was burning in him, with no longer life, if she stayed there, than the short, quick fire itself. His voice was thick when he answered, as though he were speaking through a velvet pall.

"I will kill him, if he will fight," he answered, with an effort. "I will not murder him, even for you."

She started, for she had not realized how he would take literally what she said. She had no experience of desperate men in her limited life.

"Murder him? No!" she said, snatching back her hand from his arm. "No, no! I never meant that."

"I am glad you did not. If you did, I should probably break down and do it to please you. But if he will fight like a man, I will kill him to please myself. Now I will go and get a carriage and take you home."

He rose to his feet and, turning, turned away from her, going toward the corner to get an overcoat. She followed him with her eyes, in silence.

"You are not afraid to be left alone for a quarter of an hour?" he asked, buttoning his coat, and looking toward his umbrella.

"Do not go just yet," she answered softly.

"I must. It is getting late. I shall not find a carriage if I wait any longer. I must go now."

"Do not go."

She heard him breathe hard once or twice. Then with quick strides he was beside her, and speaking to her.

"Gloria, I cannot stand it — I warn you. I love you in a way you cannot understand. You must not keep me here."

"Do not go," she said again, in the deep, soft tone of her golden voice.

"I must."

He turned from her and went towards the door. Soft and swift she followed him, but he was in the entry before her hand was on his arm. It was almost dusk out there. He stopped.

"I cannot go back to him," she said, and he could see the light in her eyes, and very faintly the red bar across the face he loved.

"You should — there is nowhere else for you to go," he said, and in the dark his hand was finding the bolt of the door to the stairs.

"No — there is nowhere else — I cannot go back to him," she answered, and the voice quavered uncertainly as the night breeze sighing amongst reeds.

"You must — you must," he tried to say.

Her weight was all upon his arm, but it was nothing to him. He steadily drew back the bolt. He turned up his face so that he could not see her.

With sudden strength her white hands went round his sinewy dark throat as he threw back his head.

"You are all I have in the world!" she half said, half whispered. "I will not let you go!"

"You?" His voice broke out as through a bursting shell.

"Yes. Come back!"

His arm fell like lead to his side. Gently she drew him back to the door of the study. The blaze of the fire shot into her face.

"Come," she said. "See how well it burns."

"Yes," he said, mechanically, "it is burning well."

He stood aside an instant at the door to let her pass. His eyelids closed and his face became rigid as a death mask of a man dead in passion. One moment only; then he followed her and softly shut the door.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The brilliant winter morning had an intoxicating quality in it, after the heavy rain which had fallen in the night, and Paul Griggs felt that it was good to be alive as he threaded the narrow streets between his lodging and the Piazza Colonna. He avoided the Corso; for he did not know whom he might meet, and he had no desire to meet any one, except Angelo Reanda.

Naturally enough, his first honourable impulse was to go to the artist, to tell him something of the truth, and to give him an opportunity of demanding the common satisfaction of a hostile meeting. It did not occur to him that Reanda would not wish to exchange shots with him and have the chance of taking his life. Griggs was not the man to refuse such an encounter, and at that moment he felt so absolutely sure of himself that the idea of being killed was very far removed from his thoughts. It was without the slightest emotion that he enquired for Reanda at the latter's house, but he was very much surprised to hear that the painter had gone out as usual at his customary hour. He hesitated a moment and then decided not to leave a card, upon

which he could not have written a message intelligible to Reanda which should not have been understood also by the servant who received it. Griggs made up his mind that he would write a formal note later in the day. He took it for granted that Reanda must be searching for his wife.

It was necessary to find a better lodging than the one in the Via della Frezza, and to provide as well as he could for Gloria's comfort. He was met by a difficulty upon which he had not reflected as yet, though he had been dimly aware of it more than once during the past twelve hours.

He was almost penniless, and he had no means of obtaining money at short notice. The payments he received from the newspapers for which he worked came regularly, but were not due for at least three weeks from that day. Alone in his bachelor existence he could have got through the time very well and without any greater privations than his capriciously ascetic nature had often imposed upon itself.

He was not an improvident man, but in his lonely existence he had no sense of future necessities, and the weakest point in his judgment was his undiscriminating generosity. Of the value of money as a store against possible needs, he had no appreciation at all, and he gave away what he earned beyond his most pressing requirements in secret and often ill-judged charities, whenever an occasion

of doing so presented itself, though he never sought one. For himself, he was able to subsist on bread and water, and the meagre fare was scarcely a privation to his hardy constitution. If he chanced to have no money to spare for fuel, he bore the cold and buttoned up his old pea-jacket to the throat while he sat at work at his table. His self-respect made him wise and careful in regard to his dress, but in other matters many a handicraftsman was accustomed to more luxury than he. At the present juncture he had been taken unawares, and he found himself in great difficulty. He had left himself barely enough for subsistence until the arrival of the next remittance, and that meant but a very few scudi; and yet he knew that certain expenses must be met immediately, almost within the twenty-four hours. The very first thing was to get a lodging suitable for Gloria. It would be necessary to pay at least one month's rent in advance. Even if he were able to do that, he would be left without a penny for daily expenses. He had no bank account; for he cashed the drafts he received and kept the money in his room. He had never borrowed of an acquaintance, and the idea was repulsive to him and most humiliating. Had he possessed any bit of jewelry, or anything of value, he would have sold the object, but he had nothing of the kind. His books were practically valueless, consisting of such volumes as he absolutely needed for his daily

use, chiefly cheap editions, poorly bound and well worn. He needed at least fifty scudi, and he did not possess quite ten. Three weeks earlier he had sent a hundred, anonymously, to free a starving artist from debt.

His position was only very partially enviable just then, but the bright north wind seemed to blow his troubles back from him as he faced it, walking home from his ineffectual attempt to meet Reanda. It was very unlike the man to return to his lodging without having accomplished anything, but he was hardly conscious of the fact. The face of the ancient city was suddenly changed, and it seemed as though nothing could go wrong if he would only allow fortune to play her own game without interference. He walked lightly, and there was a little colour in his face. He tried to think of what he should do to meet his present difficulties, but when he thought of them they were whirled away, shapeless and unrecognizable, and he felt a sense of irresistible power with each breath of the crisp dry air.

As he went along he glanced at the houses he passed, and on some of the doors were little notices scrawled in queer handwritings and telling that a lodging was to let. Occasionally he paused, looked up and hesitated, and then he went on. The difficulty was suddenly before him, and he knew that even if he looked at the rooms he could not hire them, as

he had not enough money to cover the first month's rent. Immediately he attempted to devise some means of raising the sum he needed, but before he had reached the very next corner the clear north wind had blown the trouble away like a cobweb. With all his strength and industry and determination, he was still a very young man, and perplexity had no hold upon him since passion had taken its own way.

He reached the corner of his own street and stood still for a few moments. He could almost have smiled at himself as he paused. He had been out more than an hour and had done nothing, thought out nothing, made no definite plan for the future. His present poverty, which was desperate enough, had put on a carnival mask and laughed at him, as it were, and ran away when he tried to grapple with it and look it in the face. Gloria was there, upstairs in that tall house on which the morning sun was shining, and nothing else could possibly matter. But if anything mattered, it would be simple to talk it over together and to decide it in common.

Suddenly he felt ashamed of himself and of the confusion of his own intelligence. There was something meek and childish in standing still at the street corner, watching the people as they went by, listening to the regularly recurring yell of the man who was selling country vegetables from a hand-

cart, and looking into the faces of people who went by, as though expecting to find there some solution of a difficulty which his disturbed powers of concentration did not clearly grasp. He could not think connectedly, much less could he reason sensibly. He made a few steps forward towards his house, and then stopped again, asking himself what he was going to do. He felt that he had no right to go back to Gloria until he had decided something for the future. He felt like a boy who has been sent on an errand, and who comes back having forgotten what he was to do. All at once he had lost his hold upon the logic of common-sense, and when he groped for a thread that might lead him, he was suddenly dazzled by the blaze of his happiness and deafened by the voice of his own joy.

He went on again and came to his own door. The one-eyed cobbler was at work, astride of his little bench with a brown pot of coals beside him. From time to time, when he had drawn the waxed yarn out through the leather on both sides, he blew into his black hands. Griggs stood still and looked at him in idle indetermination, and only struggling against the power that drew him towards the stairs.

"A fine north wind," observed Griggs, by way of salutation.

"It seems that it must be said," grunted the old man, punching a fresh hole in the sole he was cobbling. "To me, my fingers say it. It has

always been a fine trade, this cobbling. It is a gentleman's trade because one is always sitting down."

"I am going to change my lodging," said Griggs.

The cobbler looked up, resting his dingy fists upon the bench on each side of the shoe, his awl in one hand, the other half encased in a leathern sheath, black with age.

"After so many years!" he exclaimed. "The world will also come to an end. I expected that it would. Now where will you take lodging?"

"Where I can find one. I want a little apartment—"

"It seems that your affairs go better," observed the old man, scrutinizing the other's face with his one eye.

"No. No better. That is the trouble. I want a little apartment, and I do not want to pay for it till the end of the first month."

"Then wait till the end of the month before you move to it, Signore."

"That is impossible."

"Then there is a female," said the cobbler, without the slightest hesitation. "I understand. Why did you not say so?"

Griggs hesitated. The man's guess had taken him by surprise. He reflected that it could make no difference whether the old cobbler knew of Gloria's coming or not.

"There is a signora — a relation of mine — who has come to Rome."

"A fair signora? Very beautiful? With a little eye of the devil? I have seen. Thanks be to heaven, one eye is still good. You are dark, and your family is fair. How can it interest me?"

"What? Has she gone out?" asked Griggs, in sudden anxiety. "When?"

"I had guessed!" exclaimed the cobbler, with a grunting laugh, and he ran the delicate bristles, which pointed the yarn, in opposite directions through the hole he had made, caught one yarn round the knot on the handle of the awl and the other round the leather sheath on his left hand. He drew the yarn tight to his arm's length with a vicious jerk.

"When did the signora go out?" enquired Griggs, repeating his question.

"It may be half an hour ago. Apoplexy! If your relations are all as beautiful as that!"

But Griggs was already moving towards the staircase. The cobbler called him back, and he stood still at the foot of the steps.

"There is the little apartment on the left, on the third floor," said the man. "The lodgers went away yesterday. I was going to ask you to write me a notice to put up on the door. As for paying, the padrone will not mind, seeing that you are an old lodger. It is good, do you know? There is

"The horror of poverty smote him."—Vol. II., p. 123.

sun. There is also a kitchen. There are five rooms with the entry."

"I will take it," said Griggs, instantly, and he ran up the stairs.

He was breathless with anxiety as he entered his work-room, and looked about him for something which should tell him where Gloria was gone. Almost instantly his eyes fell upon a sheet of paper lying before his accustomed seat. The writing on it was hers.

"I have gone to tell him. I shall be back soon."

That was all it said, but it was enough to blacken the sun that streamed through the windows upon the old carpet. Griggs sat down and rested his head in his hand. With the cloud that came between him and happiness, his powers of reason returned, and he saw quickly, in the prevision of logic, a scene of violence and anger between husband and wife, a possible reconciliation, and the instant wreck of his storm-driven love. It was impossible to know what Gloria would tell Reanda.

At the same instant the difficulties of his position rushed upon him and demanded an instant solution. He looked about him at the poor room, the miserable furniture, and the worn-out carpet, and the horror of poverty smote him in the face. He had allowed Gloria to come to him, and he knew that he could not support her decently. He

had never found himself in so desperate a position in the course of his short and adventurous life. He could face anything when he alone was to suffer privation, but it was horrible to force misery upon the woman he loved.

Then, too, he asked himself what was to happen to Gloria if Reanda killed him, as was possible enough. And if he were not killed, there was Dalrymple, her father, who might return at any moment. No one could foretell what the Scotchman would do. It would be like him to do nothing except to refuse ever to see his daughter again. But he, also, might choose to fight, though his English traditions would be against it. In any case, Gloria ran the risk of being left alone, ruined and unprotected.

But the present problem was a meaner one, though not less desperate in its way. He reproached himself with having wasted even an hour when the case was so urgent. Without longer hesitation, he began to write letters to the editors for whom he worked, requesting them as a favour to advance the next remittance. Even then, he could scarcely expect to have money in less than ten days, and there was no one to whom he would willingly turn for help. Under ordinary circumstances he would have gone without food for days rather than have borrowed of an acquaintance, but he realized that he must overcome any such false

pride within a day or two, at the risk of making Gloria suffer.

In those first hours he was not conscious of any question of right or wrong in what had taken place. Honour, in a rather worldly sense, had always supplied for him the place of all other moral considerations. The woman he loved had been ill-treated by her husband, and had come to him for protection. He had done his best, in spite of his love, to make her go back, and she had known how to refuse. Men, as men, would not blame him for what he was doing. Gloria, as a woman, could never reproach him with having tempted her. He might suffer for his deeds, but he could never blush for them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Meanwhile, Gloria had gone out alone, intending to find her husband and to tell him that the die was cast, that she had left him in haste and anger, but that she never would return to his house. She felt that she must live through the chain of emotions to the very last link, as it were, until she could feel no more. It was like her to go straight to Reanda and take up the battle where she had interrupted it. Her anger had been sudden, but it was not brief. She had left weakness, and had found strength to add to her own, and she wished the man who had hurt her to feel how strong she was, and how she was able to take her life out of his hands and to keep it for herself, and live it as she pleased in spite of him and every one. The wild blood that ran in her veins was free, now, and she meant that no one but herself should ever again have the right to thwart it, to tell her heart that it should beat so many times in each minute and no more. She was perfectly well aware that she was accepting social ruin with her freedom, but she had long nourished a rancorous hatred for the society which had seemed to accept her under

protest, for Francesca's sake, and she was ready enough to turn her back on it before it should finally make up its polite mind to relegate her to the middle distance of indifferent toleration.

As for Reanda, on that first morning she hated him with all her soul, for himself, and for what he had done to her. She had words ready for him, and she turned and fitted them in her heart that they might cut him and stab him as long as he could feel. The selfishness with a tendency to cruelty which was a working spring of her father's character was strong in her, and craved the satisfaction of wounding. A part of the sudden joy in life which she felt as she walked towards what had been her home, lay in the certainty of dealing back fourfold hurt for every real and fancied injury she had ever suffered at Reanda's hands.

She felt quite sure of finding him. She did not imagine it possible that after what had happened he should go to the Palazzetto Borgia to work as usual. Besides, he must have discovered her absence by this time, and would in all probability be searching for her. She smiled at the idea, and she went swiftly on, keenly ready to give all the pain she could.

At her own door the servant seemed surprised to see her. Every one had supposed that she was still in her room, for it was not yet midday, and she sometimes slept very late. She glanced at the

hall table and saw her key lying amongst the cards where she had thrown it when she had left the house. The servant did not see her take it, for she made a pretence of turning the cards over to find some particular one. She asked indifferently about her husband. The man said that Reanda had gone out as usual. Gloria started a little in surprise, and inquired whether he had left no message for her. On hearing that he had given none, she sent the servant away, went to her own room, and locked herself in.

With a curious Scotch caution very much at variance with her conduct, she reflected that as the servants were evidently not aware of what had taken place, they might as well be kept in the dark. In a few moments she gave the room the appearance which it usually had in the morning. With perfect calmness she dressed for the day, and then rang for her maid.

She told the woman that she had slept badly, had got up early, and had gone out for a long walk; that she now intended to leave Rome for a few days, for a change of air, and must have what she needed packed within an hour. She gave a few orders, clearly and concisely, and then went out again, leaving word that if Reanda returned he should be told that she was coming back very soon.

Clearly, she thought, he must have supposed that she was still sleeping, and he had gone to his

painting without any further thought of her. Again she smiled, and a line of delicate cruelty was faintly shadowed about her lips. She left the house and walked in the direction of the Palazzetto. Reanda always came home to the midday breakfast, and it was nearly time for him to be on his way. Gloria knew every turning which he would take, and she hoped to meet him. Her eyes flashed in anticipation of the contest, and she felt that he would not be able to meet them. They would be too bright for him. There was a small mark on her cheek still, where one of the sharp edges of the ivory slats had scratched her fair skin, and there was a slight redness on that side, but the bright red bar was gone. She was glad of it, as she nodded to a passing acquaintance.

She wished to assure herself that her husband was really at the Palazzetto, and she inquired of the porter at the great gate whether Reanda had been seen that morning. The man said that he had come at the usual hour, and stood aside for her to pass, but she turned from him abruptly and went away without a word.

The blood rose in her cheeks, and her heart beat angrily. He had attached no more importance than this to what he had done, and had gone to his painting as though nothing had happened. He had not even tried to see her in the morning to beg her pardon for having struck her. Strange

to say, in spite of what she herself had done, that was what most roused her anger. She demanded the satisfaction of his asking her forgiveness, as though she had no fault to find with herself. In comparison with his cowardly violence to her, her leaving him for Griggs was as nothing in her eyes.

She walked more slowly as she went homewards, and the unspoken bitterness of her heart choked her, and the sharp words she could not speak cut her cruelly. She compared the hand that had dared to hurt though it had not strength to kill, with that other, dearer, gentler, more terrible hand, which could have killed anything, but which would rather be burned to the wrist than let one of its fingers touch her roughly. She compared them, and she loved the one and she loathed the other, with all her heart. And with that same hand Reanda, at that same moment, was painting some goddess's face, and it had forgotten whose divinely lovely cheek it had struck. It was painting unless, perhaps, it lay in Francesca's. But Gloria had not forgotten, and she would repay before the day darkened.

Her husband, since he was calm enough to go to his work, would come home for his breakfast when he was hungry. Gloria went back to her room and superintended the packing of what she needed. But she was not so calm as she had been half an hour earlier, and she waited impatiently for her

husband's return and for the last scene of the drama. When the things were packed, she had the box taken out to the hall and sent for a cab. As she foresaw the situation, she would leave the house forever as soon as the last word was spoken. Then she went into the drawing-room and waited, watching the clock.

There, on the mantelpiece, lay the broken fan, where the fragments had been placed by the servant. Gloria looked at them, handled them curiously, and felt her cheek softly with her hand. He must have struck her with all his might, she thought, to have hurt her as he had with so light a weapon; and the whole quarrel came back to her vividly, in every detail, and with every spoken word.

She could not regret what she had done. With an attempt at self-examination, which was only a self-justification, she tried to recall the early days when she had loved her husband, and to conjure up the face with the gentle light in it. She failed, of course, and the picture that came disgusted her and was unutterably contemptible and weak and full of cowardice. The face of Paul Griggs came in its place a moment later, and she heard in her ears the deep, stern voice, quavering with strength rather than with weakness, and she could feel the arms she loved about her, pressing her almost to pain, able to press her to death in their love-clasp.

The hands of the clock went on, and Reanda did not come. She was surprised to find how long she had waited, and with a revulsion of feeling she rose to her feet. If he would not come, she would not wait for him. She was hungry, too. It was absurd, perhaps, but she would not eat his bread nor sit at his table, not even alone. She went to her writing-table and wrote a note to him, short, cruel, and decisive. She wrote that if her father had been in Rome she would have gone to him for protection. As he was absent, she had gone to her father's best friend and her own — to Paul Griggs. She said nothing more. He might interpret the statement as he pleased. She sealed the note and addressed it, and before she went out of the house she gave it to the servant, to be given to Reanda as soon as he came home. The manservant went downstairs with her, and stood looking after the little open cab; he saw Gloria speak to the coachman, who nodded and changed his direction before they were out of sight.

At the door in the Via della Frezza the cabman let down Gloria's luggage and drove away. She stood still a moment and looked at the one-eyed cobbler.

"You have given the signore a beautiful fright," observed the old man. "I told him you had gone out. With one jump he was upstairs. By this time he cries."

Gloria took a silver piece of two pauls from her purse.

"Can you carry up these things for me?" she inquired, concealing her annoyance at the man's speech.

"I am not a porter," said the cobbler, with his head on one side. "But one must live. With courage and money one makes war. There are three pieces. One at a time. But you must watch the door while I carry up the box. If any one should steal my tools, it would be a beautiful day's work. Without them I should be in the middle of the street. You will understand, Signora. It is not to do you a discourtesy, but my tools are my bread. Without them I cannot eat. There is also the left boot of Sor Ercole. If any one were to steal it, Sor Ercole would go upon one leg. Imagine the disgrace!"

"I will stay here," said Gloria. "Do not be afraid."

The cobbler, who was a strong old man, got hold of the trunk and shouldered it with ease. When he stood up, Gloria saw that he was bandy-legged and very short.

She turned and stood on the threshold of the street door as she had stood on the previous night. No one would have believed that a few hours earlier the rain had fallen in torrents, for the pavement was dry, and even under the arch there

seemed to be no dampness. Looking up the street towards the Corso, she saw that there was a wine shop, a few doors higher on the opposite side. Two or three men were standing before it, under the brown bush which served for a sign, and amongst them she saw a peasant in blue cloth clothes with silver buttons and clean white stockings. She recognized him as the man who had held his umbrella over her in the storm. He also saw her, lifted his felt hat and came forwards, crossing the street. His look was fixed on her face with a stare of curiosity as he stood before her.

"I hope you have not caught cold, Signora," he said, with steady, unwinking eyes. "We passed a beautiful storm. Signora, I sell wine to that host. If you should need wine, I recommend him to you." He pointed to the shop.

"You told me to ask for you at the Piazza Montanara," said Gloria, smiling.

"With that water you could not see the shop," answered Stefanone. "Signora, you are very beautiful. With permission, I say that you should not walk alone at night."

"It was the first and last time," said Gloria. "Fortunately, I met a person of good manners. I thank you again."

"Signora, you are so beautiful that the Madonna and her angels always accompany you. With permission, I go. Good day."

To the last, until he turned, he kept his eyes steadily fixed on Gloria's face, as though searching for a resemblance in her features. She noticed his manner and remembered him very distinctly after the second meeting.

The cobbler came back again, closely followed by Griggs himself, who said nothing, but took possession of the small valise and bag which Gloria had brought in addition to her box. He led the way, and she followed him swiftly. Inside the door of his lodging he turned and looked at her.

"Please do not go away suddenly without telling me," he said in a low voice. "I am easily frightened about you."

"Really?"

Gloria held out her two hands to meet him. He nodded as he took them.

"That is better than anything you have ever said to me." She drew him to her.

It was natural, for she was thinking how Reanda had calmly gone back to his work that morning, without so much as asking for her. The contrast was too great and too strong, between love and indifference.

They went into the work-room together, and Gloria sat down on one of the rush chairs, and told Griggs what she had done. He walked slowly up and down while she was speaking, his eyes on the pattern of the old carpet.

"I might have stayed," she said at last. "The servants did not even know that I had been out of the house."

"You should have stayed," said Griggs. "I ought to say it, at least."

But as he spoke the mask softened and the rare smile beautified for one instant the still, stern face.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Reanda neither wished to see Gloria again, nor to take vengeance upon Paul Griggs. He was not a brave man, morally or physically, and he was glad that his wife had left him. She had put him in the right, and he had every reason for refusing ever to see her again. With a cynicism which would have been revolting if it had not been almost childlike in its simplicity, he discharged his servants, sold his furniture, gave up his apartment in the Corso, and moved back to his old quarters in the Palazzetto Borgia. But he did not acknowledge Gloria's note in any other way.

She had left him, and he wished to blot out her existence as though he had never known her, not even remembering the long two years of his married life. She was gone. There was no Gloria, and he wished that there never had been any woman with her name and face.

On the third day, he met Paul Griggs in the street. The younger man saw Reanda coming, and stood still on the narrow pavement, in order to show that he had no intention of avoiding him. As the artist came up, Griggs lifted his hat gravely. Reanda mechanically raised his hand to his own

hat and passed the man who had injured him, without a word. Griggs saw a slight, nervous twitching in the delicate face, but that was all. He thought that Reanda looked better, less harassed and less thin, than for a long time. He had at once returned to his old peaceful life and enjoyed it, and had evidently not the smallest intention of ever demanding satisfaction of his former friend.

Francesca Campodonico had listened in nervous silence to Reanda's story.

"She has done me a kindness," he concluded. "It is the first. She has given me back my freedom. I shall not disturb her."

The colour was in Francesca's face, and her eyes looked down. Her delicate lips were a little drawn in, as though she were making an effort to restrain her words, for it was one of the hardest moments of her life. Being what she was, it was impossible for her to understand Gloria's conduct. But at the same time she felt that she was liberated from something which had oppressed her, and the colour in her cheeks was a flash of satisfaction and relief mingled with a certain displeasure at her own sensations and the certainty that she should be ashamed of them by and bye.

It was not in her nature to accept such a termination for Reanda's married life, however he himself might be disposed to look upon it.

"You are to blame almost as much as Gloria," she said, and she was sincerely in earnest.

She was too good and devout a woman to believe in duelling, but she was far too womanly to be pleased with Reanda's indifference. It was wicked to fight duels and unchristian to seek revenge. She knew that, and it was a conviction as well as an opinion. But a man who allowed another to take his wife from him and did not resent the injury could not command her respect. Something in her blood revolted against such tameness, though she would not for all the world have had Reanda take Gloria back. Between the two opposites of conviction and instinct, she did not know what to do. Moreover, Reanda had struck his wife. He admitted it, though apologetically and with every extenuating circumstance which he could remember.

"Yes," he answered. "I know that I did wrong. Am I infallible? Holy Saint Patience! I could bear no more. But it is clear that she was waiting for a reason for leaving me. I gave it to her, and she should be grateful. She also is free, as I am."

"It is horrible!" exclaimed Francesca, with sorrowful emphasis.

She blamed herself quite as much as Reanda or Gloria, because she had brought them together and had suggested the marriage. Reanda's thin shoulders went up, and he smiled incredulously.

"I do not see what is so horrible," he answered. "Two people think they are in love. They marry. They discover their mistake. They separate. Well? It is finished. Let us make the sign of the cross over it."

The common Roman phrase, signifying that a matter is ended and buried, as it were, jarred upon Francesca, for whom the smallest religious allusion had a real meaning.

"It is not the sign of the cross which should be made," she said sadly and gravely, and the colour was gone from her face now. "There are two lives wrecked, and a human soul in danger. We cannot say that it is finished, and pass on."

"What would you have me do?" asked Reanda, almost impatiently. "Take her back?"

"No!" exclaimed Francesca, with a sharp intonation as though she were hurt.

"Well, then, what? I do not see that anything is to be done. She herself can think of her soul. It is her property. She has made me suffer enough — let some one else suffer. I have enough of it."

"You will forgive her some day," said Francesca. "You are angry still, and you speak cruelly. You will forgive her."

"Never," answered Reanda, with emphasis "I will not forgive her for what she made me bear, any more than I will forgive Griggs for receiving her when she left me. I will not touch them, but

I will not forgive them. I am not angry. Why should I be?"

Francesca sighed, for she did not understand the man, though hitherto she had always understood him, or thought that she had, ever since she had been a mere child, playing with his colours and brushes in the Palazzo Braccio. She left the hall and went to her own sitting-room on the other side of the house. As soon as she was alone, the tears came to her eyes. She was hardly aware of them, and when she felt them on her cheeks she wondered why she was crying, for she did not often shed tears, and was a woman of singularly well balanced nature, able to control herself on the rare occasions when she felt any strong emotion.

In spite of Reanda's conduct, she determined not to leave matters as they were without attempting to improve them. She wrote a note to Paul Griggs, asking him to come and see her during the afternoon.

He could not refuse to answer the summons, knowing, as he did, that he must in honour respond to any demand for an explanation coming from Reanda's side. Gloria wished him to reply to the note, giving an excuse and hinting that no good could come of any meeting.

"It is a point of honour," he answered briefly, and she yielded, for he dominated her altogether.

Francesca received him in her own small sitting-

room, which overlooked the square before the Palazzetto. It was very quiet, and there were roses in old Vienna vases. It was a very old-fashioned room, the air was sweet with the fresh flowers, and the afternoon sun streamed in through a single tall window. Francesca sat on a small sofa which stood crosswise between the window and the writing-table. She had a frame before her on which was stretched a broad band of deep red satin, a piece of embroidery in which she was working heraldic beasts and armorial bearings in coloured silks.

She did not rise, nor hold out her hand, but pointed to a chair near her, as she spoke.

"I asked you to come," she said, "because I wish to speak to you about Gloria."

Griggs bent his head, sat down, and waited with a perfectly impassive face. Possibly there was a rather unusual aggressiveness in the straight lines of his jaw and his even lips. There was a short silence before Francesca spoke again.

"Do you know what you have done?" she asked, finishing a stitch and looking quietly into the man's deep eyes.

He met her glance calmly, but said nothing, merely bending his head again, very slightly.

"It is very wicked," said she, and she began to make another stitch, looking down again.

"I have no doubt that you think so," answered Paul Griggs, slowly nodding a third time.

"It is not a question of opinion. It is a matter of fact. You have ruined the life of an innocent woman."

"If social position is the object of existence, you are right," he replied. "I have nothing to say."

"I am not speaking of social position," said Donna Francesca, continuing to make stitches.

"Then I am afraid that I do not understand you."

"Can you conceive of nothing more important to the welfare of men and women than social position?"

"It is precisely because I do, that I care so little what society thinks. I do not understand you."

"I have known you some time," said Francesca. "I had not supposed that you were a man without a sense of right and wrong. That is the question which is concerned now."

"It is a question which may be answered from more than one point of view. You look at it in one way, and I in another. With your permission, we will differ about it, since we can never agree."

"There is no such thing as differing about right and wrong," answered Donna Francesca, with a little impatience. "Right is right, and wrong is wrong. You cannot possibly believe that you have done right. Therefore you know that you have done wrong."

"That sort of logic assumes God at the expense of man," said Griggs, calmly.

Francesca looked up with a startled expression in her eyes, for she was shocked, though she did not understand him.

"God is good, and man is sinful," she answered, in the words of her simple faith.

"Why?" asked Griggs, gravely.

He waited for her answer to the most tremendous question which man can ask, and he knew that she could not answer him, though she might satisfy herself.

"I have never talked about religion with an atheist," she said at last, slowly pushing her needle through the heavy satin.

"I am not an atheist, Princess."

"A Protestant, then —"

"I am not a Protestant. I am a Catholic, as you are."

She looked up suddenly and faced him with earnest eyes.

"Then you are not a good Catholic," she said. "No good Catholic could speak as you do."

"Even the Apostles had doubts," answered Griggs. "But I do not pretend to be good. Since I am a man, I have a right to be a man, and to be treated as a man. If the right is not given me freely, I will take it. You cannot expect a body to behave as though it were a spirit. A man can-

not imitate an invisible essence, any more than a sculptor can imitate sound with a shape of clay. When we are spirits, we shall act as spirits. Meanwhile we are men and women. As a man, I have not done wrong. You have no right to judge me as an angel. Is that clear?"

"Terribly clear!" Francesca slowly shook her head. "And terribly mistaken," she added.

"You see," answered the young man. "It is impossible to argue the point. We do not speak the same language. You, by your nature, believe that you can imitate a spirit. You are spiritual by intuition and good by instinct, according to the spiritual standard of good. I am, on the contrary, a normal man, and destined to act as men act. I cannot understand you and you, if you will allow me to say so, cannot possibly understand me. That is why I propose that we should agree to differ."

"And do you think you can sweep away all right and wrong, belief and unbelief, salvation and perdition, with such a statement as that?"

"Not at all," replied Griggs. "You tell me that I am wicked. That only means that I am not doing what you consider right. You deny my right of judgment, in favour of your own. You make witnesses of spirits against the doings of men. You judge my body and condemn my soul. And there is no possible appeal from your tribunal, because it is an imaginary one. But if you will

return to the facts of the case, you will find it hard to prove that I have ruined the life of an innocent woman, as you told me that I had."

"You have! There is no denying it."

"Socially, and it is the fault of society. But society is nothing to me. I would be an outcast from society for a much less object than the love of a woman, provided that I had not to do anything dishonourable."

"Ah, that is it! You forget that a man's honour is his reputation at the club, while the honour of a woman is founded in religion, and maintained upon a single one of God's commandments — as you men demand that it shall be."

Griggs was silent for a moment. He had never heard a woman state the case so plainly and forcibly, and he was struck by what she said. He could have answered her quickly enough. But the answer would not have been satisfactory to himself.

"You see, you have nothing to say," she said. "But in one way you are right. We cannot argue this question. I did not ask you to come in order to discuss it. I sent for you to beg you to do what is right, as far as you can. And you could do much."

"What should you think right?" asked Griggs, curious to know what she thought.

"You should take Gloria to her father, as you

are his friend. Since she has left her husband, she should live with her father."

"That is a very simple idea!" exclaimed the young man, with something almost like a laugh.

"Right is always simple," answered Francesca, quietly. "There is never any doubt about it."

She looked at him once, and then continued to work at her embroidery. His eyes rested on the pure outline of her maidenlike face, and he was silent for a moment. Somehow, he felt that her simplicity of goodness rebuked the simplicity of his sin.

"You forget one thing," said Griggs at last. "You make a spiritual engine of mankind, and you forget the mainspring of the world. You leave love out of the question."

"Perhaps — as you understand love. But you will not pretend to tell me that love is necessarily right, whatever it involves."

"Yes," answered the young man. "That is what I mean. Unless your God is a malignant and maleficent demon, the overwhelming passions which take hold of men, and against which no man can fight beyond a certain point, are right, because they exist and are irresistible. As for what you propose that I should do, I cannot do it."

"You could, if you would," said Francesca. "There is nothing to hinder you, if you will."

"There is love, and I cannot."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Paul Griggs left Francesca with the certainty in his own mind that she had produced no impression whatever upon him, but he was conscious that his opinion of her had undergone a change. He was suddenly convinced that she was the best woman he had ever known, and that Gloria's accusations were altogether unjust and unfounded. Recalling her face, her manner, and her words, he knew that whatever influence she might have had upon Reanda, there could be no ground for Gloria's jealousy. She certainly disturbed him strangely, for Gloria was perfect in his eyes, and he accepted all she said almost blindly. The fact that Reanda had struck her now stood in his mind as the sole reason for the separation of husband and wife.

Gloria was far from realizing what influence she had over the man she loved. It seemed to her, on the contrary, that she was completely dominated by him, and she was glad to feel his strength at every turn. Her enormous vanity was flattered by his care of her, and by his uncompromising admiration of her beauty as well as of her character, and she yielded to him purposely in small things that

she might the better feel his strength, as she supposed. The truth, had she known it, was that he hardly asserted himself at all, and was ready to make any and every sacrifice for her comfort and happiness. He had sacrificed his pride to borrow money from a friend to meet the first necessities of their life together. He would have given his life as readily.

They led a strangely lonely existence in the little apartment in the Via della Frezza. The world had very soon heard of what had happened, and had behaved according to its lights. Walking alone one morning while Griggs was at work, Gloria had met Donna Tullia Meyer, whom she had known in society, and thoughtlessly enough had bowed as though nothing had happened. Donna Tullia had stared at her coldly, and then turned away. After that, Gloria had realized what she had already understood, and had either not gone out without Griggs, or, when she did, had kept to the more secluded streets, where she would not easily meet acquaintances.

Griggs worked perpetually, and she watched him, delighting at first in the difference between his way of working and that of Angelo Reanda; delighted, too, to be alone with him, and to feel that he was writing for her. She could sit almost in silence for hours, half busy with some bit of needlework, and yet busy with him in her thoughts. It

seemed to her that she understood him—she told him so, and he believed her, for he felt that he could not be hard to understand.

He was as singularly methodical as Reanda was exceptionally intuitive. She felt that his work was second to her in his estimation of it, but that, since they both depended upon it for their livelihood, they had agreed together to put it first. With Reanda, art was above everything and beyond all other interests, and he had made her feel that he worked for art's sake rather than for hers. There was a vast difference in the value placed upon her by the two men, in relation to their two occupations.

"I have no genius," said Griggs to her one day. "I have no intuitions of underlying truth. But I have good brains, and few men are able to work as hard as I. By and bye, I shall succeed and make money, and it will be less dull for you."

"It is never dull for me when I can be with you," she answered.

As he looked, the sunshine caught her red auburn hair, and the love-lights played with the sunshine in her eyes. Griggs knew that life had no more dulness for him while she lived, and as for her, he believed what she said.

Without letting him know what she was doing, she wrote to her father. It was not an easy letter to write, and she thought that she knew the savage

old Scotchman's temper. She told him everything. At such a distance, it was easy to throw herself upon his mercy, and it was safer to write him all while he was far away, so that there might be nothing left to rouse his anger if he returned. She had no lack of words with which to describe Reanda's treatment of her; but she was also willing to take all the blame of the mistake she had made in marrying him. She had ruined her life before it had begun, she said. She had taken the law into her own hands, to mend it as best she could. Her father knew that Paul Griggs was not like other men — that he was able to protect her against all comers, and that he could make the world fear him if he could not make it respect her. Her father must do as he thought right. He would be justified, from the world's point of view, in casting her off and never remembering her existence again, but she begged him to forgive her, and to think kindly of her. Meanwhile, she and Griggs were wretchedly poor, and she begged her father to continue her allowance.

If Paul Griggs had seen this letter, he would have been startled out of some of his belief in Gloria's perfection. There was a total absence of any moral sense of right or wrong in what she wrote, which would have made a more cynical man than Griggs was look grave. The request for the continuation of the allowance would have shocked

him and perhaps disgusted him. The whole tone was too calm and business-like. It was too much as though she were fulfilling a duty and seeking to gain an object rather than appealing to Dalrymple to forgive her for yielding to the overwhelming mastery of a great passion. It was cold, it was calculating, and it was, in a measure, unwomanly.

When she had sent the letter, she told Griggs what she had done, but her account of its contents satisfied him with one of those brilliant false impressions which she knew so well how to convey. She told him rather what she should have said than what she had really written, and, as usual, he found that she had done right.

It was not that she would not have written a better letter if she had been able to compose one. She had done the best that she could. But the truth lay there, orf the letter was composed as an expression of what she knew that she ought to feel, and was not the actual outpouring of an overfull heart. She could not be blamed for not feeling more deeply, nor for her inability to express what she did not feel. But when she spoke of it to the man she loved, she roused herself to emotion easily enough, and her words sounded well in her own ears and in his. To the last, he never understood that she loved such emotion for its own sake, and that he helped her to produce it in herself. In the

comparatively simple view of human nature which he took in those days, it seemed to him that if a woman were willing to sacrifice everything, including social respectability itself, for any man, she must love him with all her heart. He could not have understood that any woman should give up everything, practically, in the attempt to feel something of which she was not capable.

In reply to her letter, Dalrymple sent a draft for a considerable sum of money, through his banker. The fact that it was addressed to her at Via della Frezza was the only indication that he had received her letter. In due time, Gloria wrote to thank him, but he took no notice of the communication.

"He never loved me," she said to Griggs as the days went by and brought her nothing from her father. "I used to think so, when I was a mere child, but I am sure of it now. You are the only human being that ever loved me."

She was pale that day, and her white hand sought his as she spoke, with a quiver of the lip.

"I am glad of it," he answered. "I shall not divide you with any one."

So their life went on, somewhat monotonously after the first few weeks. Griggs worked hard and earned more money than formerly, but he discovered very soon that it would be all he could do to support Gloria in bare comfort. He would not allow her to use her own money for anything which

was to be in common, or in which he had any share whatever.

"You must spend it on yourself," he said. "I will not touch it. I will not accept anything you buy with it — not so much as a box of cigarettes. You must spend it on your clothes or on jewels."

"You are unkind," she answered. "You know how much pleasure it would give me to help you."

"Yes. I know. You cannot understand, but you must try. Men never do that sort of thing."

And, as usual, he dominated her, and she dropped the subject, inwardly pleased with him, and knowing that he was right.

His strength fascinated her, and she admired his manliness of heart and feeling as she had never admired any qualities in any one during her life. But he did not amuse her, even as much as she had been amused by Reanda. He was melancholic, earnest, hard working, not inclined to repeat lightly the words of love once spoken in moments of passion. He meant, perhaps, to show her how he loved her by what he would do for her sake, rather than tell her of it over and over again. And he worked as he had never worked before, hour after hour, day after day, sitting at his writing-table almost from morning till night. Besides his correspondence, he was now writing a book, from which he hoped great things — for her. It was a novel, and he read her day by day the pages he wrote.

She talked over with him what he had written, and her imagination and dramatic intelligence, forever grasping at situations of emotion for herself and others, suggested many variations upon his plan.

"It is my book," she often said, when they had been talking all the evening.

It was her book, and it was a failure, because it was hers and not his. Her imagination was disorderly, to borrow a foreign phrase, and she was altogether without any sense of proportion in what she imagined. He did not, indeed, look upon her as intellectually perfect, though for him she was otherwise unapproachably superior to every other woman in the world. But he loved her so wholly and unselfishly that he could not bear to disappoint her by not making use of her suggestions. When she was telling him of some scene she had imagined, her voice and manner, too, were so thoroughly dramatic that he was persuaded of the real value of the matter. Divested of her individuality and transferred in his rather mechanically over-correct language to the black and white of pen and ink, the result was disappointing, even when he read it to her. He knew that it was, and wasted time in trying to improve what was bad from the beginning. She saw that he failed, and she felt that he was not a man of genius. Her vanity suffered because her ideas did not look well on his paper.

Before he had finished the manuscript, she had lost her interest in it. Feeling that she had, and seeing it in her face, he exerted his strength of will in the attempt to bring back the expression of surprise and delight which the earlier readings had called up, but he felt that he was working uphill and against heavy odds. Nevertheless he completed the work, and spent much time in fancied improvement of its details. At a later period in his life he wrote three successful books in the time he had bestowed upon his first failure, but he wrote them alone.

Gloria's face brightened when he told her that it was done. She took the manuscript and read over parts of it to herself, smiling a little from time to time, for she knew that he was watching her. She did not read it all.

"Dedicate it to me," she said, holding out one hand to find his, while she settled the pages on her knees with the other.

"Of course," he answered, and he wrote a few words of dedication to her on a sheet of paper.

He sent it to a publisher in London whom he knew. It was returned with some wholesome advice, and Gloria's vanity suffered another blow, both in the failure of the book which contained so many of her ideas and in the failure of the man to be successful, for in her previous life she had not been accustomed to failure of any sort.

"I am afraid I am only a newspaper man, after all," said Paul Griggs, quietly. "You will have to be satisfied with me as I am. But I will try again."

"No," answered Gloria, more coldly than she usually spoke. "When you find that you cannot do a thing naturally, leave it alone. It is of no use to force talent in one direction when it wants to go in another."

She sighed softly, and busied herself with some work. Griggs felt that he was a failure, and he felt lonely, too, for a moment, and went to his own room to put away the rejected manuscript in a safe place. It was not his nature to destroy it angrily, as some men might have done at his age.

When he came back to the door of the sitting-room he heard her singing, as she often did when she was alone. But to-day she was singing an old song which he had not heard for a long time, and which reminded him painfully of that other house in which she had lived and of that other man whom she never saw, but who was still her husband.

He entered the room rather suddenly, after having paused a moment outside, with his hand on the door.

"Please do not sing that song!" he said quickly, as he entered.

"Why not?" she asked, interrupting herself in the middle of a stave.

"It reminds me of unpleasant things."

"Does it? I am sorry. I will not sing it again."

But she knew what it meant, for it reminded her of Reanda. She was no longer so sure that the reminiscence was all painful.

CHAPTER XXXV.

In spite of all that Griggs could do, and he did his utmost, it was hard to live in anything approaching to comfort on the meagre remuneration he received for his correspondence, and his pride altogether forbade him to allow Gloria to contribute anything to the slender resources of the small establishment. At first, it had amused her to practise little economies, even in the matter of their daily meals. Griggs denied himself everything which was not absolutely necessary, and it pleased Gloria to imitate him, for it made her feel that she was helping him. The housekeeping was a simple affair enough, and she undertook it readily. They had one woman servant as cook and maid-of-all-work, a strong young creature, not without common-sense, and plentifully gifted with that warm, superficial devotion which is common enough in Italian servants. Gloria had kept house for her father long enough to understand what she had undertaken, and it seemed easy at first to do the same thing for Griggs, though on a much more restricted scale.

But the restriction soon became irksome. In a

more active and interesting existence, she would perhaps not have felt the constant pinching of such excessive economy. If there had been more means within her reach for satisfying her hungry vanity, she could have gone through the daily round of little domestic cares with a lighter heart or, at least, with more indifference. But she and Griggs led a very lonely life, and, as in all lonely lives, the smallest details became important.

It was not long before Gloria wished herself in her old home in the Corso, not indeed with Reanda, but with Paul Griggs. He had made her promise to use only the money he gave her himself for their housekeeping. She secretly deceived him and drew upon her own store, and listened in silence to his praise of her ingenuity in making the little he was able to give her go so far. He trusted her so completely that he suspected nothing.

She expected that at the end of three months her father would send her another draft, but the day passed, and she received nothing, so that she at last wrote to him again, asking for money. It came, as before, without any word of inquiry or greeting. Dalrymple evidently intended to take this means of knowing from time to time that his daughter was alive and well. She would be obliged to write to him whenever she needed assistance. It was a humiliation, and she felt it bitterly, for she had thought that she had freed herself altogether and

she found herself still bound by the necessity of asking for help.

It seemed very hard to be thus shut off from the world in the prime of her youth, and beauty, and talent. To a woman who craved admiration for all she did and could do, it was almost unbearable. Paul Griggs worked and looked forward to success, and was satisfied in his aspirations, and more than happy in the companionship of the woman he so dearly loved.

"I shall succeed," he said quietly, but with perfect assurance. "Before long we shall be able to leave Rome, and begin life somewhere else, where nobody will know our story. It will not be so dull for you there."

"It is never dull when I am with you," said Gloria, but there was no conviction in the tone any more. "If you would let me go upon the stage," she added, with a change of voice, "things would be very different. I could earn a great deal of money."

But Paul Griggs was as much opposed to the project as Reanda had been, and in this one respect he really asserted his will. He was so confident of ultimately attaining to success and fortune by his pen that he would not hear of Gloria's singing in public.

"Besides," he said, after giving her many and excellent reasons, "if you earned millions, I would not touch the money."

She sighed for the lost opportunities of brilliant popularity, but she smiled at his words, knowing how she had used her own money for him, and in spite of him. But for her own part she had lost all belief in his talent since the failure of the book he had written.

The long summer days were hard to bear. He was not able to leave Rome, for he was altogether dependent upon his regular correspondence for what he earned, and he did not succeed in persuading his editors to employ him anywhere else, for the very reason that he did so well what was required of him where he was.

The weather grew excessively hot, and it was terribly dreary and dull in the little apartment in the Via della Frezza. All day long the windows were tightly closed to keep out the fiery air, both the old green blinds and the glass within them. Griggs had moved his writing-table to the feeble light, and worked away as hard as ever. Gloria spent most of the hot hours in reading and dreaming. They went out together early in the morning and in the evening, when there was some coolness, but during the greater part of the day they were practically imprisoned by the heat.

Gloria watched the strong man and wondered at his power of working under any circumstances. He was laborious as well as industrious. He often wrote a page over two and three times, in the hope

of improving it, and he was capable of spending an hour in finding a quotation from a great writer, not for the sake of quoting it, but in order to satisfy himself that he had authority for using some particular construction of phrase. He kept notebooks in which he made long indexed lists of words which in common language were improperly used, with examples showing how they should be rightly employed.

"I am constructing a superiority for myself," he said once. "No one living takes so much pains as I do."

But Gloria had no faith in his painstaking ways, though she wondered at his unflagging perseverance. Her own single great talent lay in her singing, and she had never given herself any trouble about it. Reanda, too, though he worked carefully and often slowly, worked without effort. It was true that Griggs never showed fatigue, but that was due to his amazing bodily strength. The intellectual labour was apparent, however, and he always seemed to be painfully overcoming some almost unyielding difficulty by sheer force of steady application, though nothing came of it, so far as she could see.

"I cannot understand why you take so much trouble," she said. "They are only newspaper articles, after all, to be read to-day and forgotten to-morrow."

"I am learning to write," he answered. "It takes a long time to learn anything unless one has a great gift, as you have for singing. I have failed with one book, but I will not fail with another. The next will not be an extraordinary book, but it will succeed."

Nothing could disturb him, and he sat at his table day after day. He was moved by the strongest incentives which can act upon a man, at the time when he himself is strongest; namely, necessity and love. Even Gloria could never discover whether he had what she would have called ambition. He himself said that he had none, and she compared him with Reanda, who believed in the divinity of art, the temple of fame, and the reality of glory.

In the young man's nature, Gloria had taken the place of all other divinities, real and imaginary. His enduring nature could no more be wearied in its worship of her than it could be tired in toiling for her. He only resented the necessity of cutting out such a main part of the day for work as left him but little time to be at leisure with her.

She complained of his industry, for she was tired of spending her life with novels, and the hours hung like leaden weights upon her, dragging with her as she went through the day.

"Give yourself a rest," she said, not because she thought he needed it, but because she wished him to amuse her.

"I am never tired of working for you," he answered, and the rare smile came to his face.

With any other man in the world she might have told the truth and might have said frankly that her life was growing almost unbearable, buried from the world as she was, and cut off from society. But she was conscious that she should never dare to say as much to Paul Griggs. She was realizing, little by little, that his love for her was greater than she had dreamed of, and immeasurably stronger than what she felt for him.

Then she knew the pain of receiving more than she had to give. It was a genuine pain of its kind, and in it, as in many other things, she suffered a constant humiliation. She had taken herself for a heroic character in the great moment when she had resolved to leave her husband, intuitively sure that she loved Paul Griggs with all her heart, and that she should continue to love him to the end in spite of the world. She knew now that there was no endurance in the passion.

The very efforts she made to sustain it contributed to its destruction; but she continued to play her part. Her strong dramatic instinct told her when to speak and when to be silent, and how to modulate her voice to a tender appeal, to a touching sadness, to the strength of suppressed emotion. It was for a good object, she told herself, and therefore it must be right. He was giving his life

for her, day by day, and he must never know that she no longer loved him. It would kill him, she thought; for with him it was all real. She grew melancholy and thought of death. If she died young, he should never guess that she had not loved him to the very last.

In her lonely thoughts she dwelt upon the possibility, for it was a possibility now. There was that before her which, when it came, might turn life into death very suddenly. She had moments of tenderness when she thought of her own dead face lying on the white pillow, and the picture was so real that her eyes filled with tears. She would be very beautiful when she was dead.

The idea took root in her mind; for it afforded her an inward emotion which touched her strangely and cost her nothing. It gained in fascination as she allowed it to come back when it would, and the details of death came vividly before her imagination, as she had read of them in books, — her own white face, the darkened room, the candles, Paul Griggs standing motionless beside her body.

One day he looked from his work and saw tears on her cheeks. He dropped his pen as though something had struck him unawares; and he was beside her in a moment, looking anxiously into her eyes.

"What is it?" he asked, and his hands were on hers and pressed them.

"It is nothing," she answered. "It is natural, I suppose —"

"No. It is not natural. You are unhappy. Tell me what is the matter."

"It is foolish," she said, turning her face from him. "I see you working so hard day after day. I am a burden to you — it would be better if I were out of the way. You are working yourself to death. If you could see your face sometimes!" And more tears trickled down.

His strong hands shook suddenly.

"I am not working too hard — for me," he answered, but his voice trembled a little. "One of your tears hurts me more than a hundred years of hard work. Even if it were true — I would rather die for you than live to be the greatest man that ever breathed — without you."

She threw her arms about his neck, and hid her face upon his shoulder.

"Tell me you love me!" she cried. "You are all I have in the world!"

"Does it need telling?" he asked, soothing her.

Then all at once his arms tightened so that she could hardly draw breath for a moment, and his head was bent down and rested for an instant upon her neck as though he himself sought rest and refuge.

"I think you know, dear," he said.

She knew far better than he could tell her, for

the truth of his passion shook the dramatic and artificial fabric of her own to its foundations; and even as she pressed him to her, she felt that secret repugnance which those who do not love feel for those who love them overmuch. It was mingled with a sense of shame which made her hate herself, and she began to suffer acutely.

When she thought of Reanda, as she now often did, she longed for what she had felt for him, rather than for anything she had ever felt for Paul Griggs. In the pitiful reaching after something real, she groped for memories of true tenderness, and now and then they came back to her from beyond the chaos which lay between, as memories of home come to a man cast after many storms upon a desert island. She dwelt upon them and tried to construct an under-life out of the past, made up only of sweet things amongst which all that had not been good should be forgotten. She went for comfort to the days when she had loved Reanda, before their marriage — or when she had loved his genius as though it were himself, believing that it was all for her.

Beside her always, with even, untiring strength, Paul Griggs toiled on, his whole life based and founded in hers, every penstroke for her, every dream of her, every aspiration and hope for her alone. He was splendidly unconscious of his own utter loneliness, blankly unaware of the life-

comedy — or tragedy — which Gloria was acting for him out of pity for the heart she could break, and out of shame at finding out what her own heart was. Had he known the truth, the end would have come quickly and terribly. But he did not know it. The woman's gifts were great, and her beauty was greater. Greater than all was his whole-souled belief in her. He had never conceived it possible, in his ignorance of women, that a woman should really love him. She, whom he had first loved so hopelessly, had given him all she had to give, which was herself, frankly and freely. And after she had come to him, she loved him for a time, beyond even self-deception. But when she no longer loved him, she hid her secret and kept it long and well; for she feared him. He was not like Reanda. He would not strike only; he would kill and make an end of both.

But she might have gone much nearer to the truth without danger. It was not his nature to ask anything nor to expect much, and he had taken all there was to take, and knew it, and was satisfied.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The summer passed, with its monotonous heat. Rain fell in August and poisoned the campagna with fever for six weeks, and the clear October breezes blew from the hills, and the second greenness of the late season was over everything for a brief month of vintage and laughter. Then came November with its pestilent sirocco gales and its dampness, pierced and cut through now and then by the first northerly winds of winter.

And then, one day, there was a new life in the little apartment in the Via della Frezza. Fate, relentless, had brought to the light a little child, to be the grandson of that fated Maria Braccio who had died long ago, to have his day of happiness and his night of suffering in his turn and to be a living bond between Gloria and the man who loved her.

They called the boy Walter Crowdie for a relative of Angus Dalrymple, who had been the last of the name. It was convenient, and he would never need any other, nor any third name after the two given to him in baptism.

For a few days after the child's birth, Griggs

left his writing-table. He was almost too happy to work, and he spent many hours by Gloria's side, not talking, for he knew that she must be kept quiet, but often holding her hand and always looking at her face, with the strong, dumb devotion of a faithful bloodhound.

Often she pretended to be sleeping when he was there, though she was wide awake and could have talked well enough. But it was easier to seem to be asleep than to play the comedy now, while she was so weak and helpless. With the simplicity of a little child Griggs watched her, and when her eyes were closed believed that she was sleeping. As soon as she opened them he spoke to her. She understood and sometimes smiled in spite of herself, with close-shut lids. He thought she was dreaming of him, or of the child, and was smiling in her sleep.

As she lay there and thought over all that had happened, she knew that she hated him as she had never loved him, even in the first days. And she hated the child, for its life was the last bond, linking her to Paul Griggs and barring her from the world forever. Until it had been there she had vaguely felt that if she had the courage and really wished it, she might in some way get back to her old life. She knew that all hope of that was gone from her now.

In the deep perspective of her loosened intelli-

gence the endless years to come rolled away, grey and monotonous, to their vanishing point. She had made her choice and had not found heart to give it up, after she had made it, while there was yet time. Time itself took shape before her closed eyes, as many succeeding steps, and she saw herself toiling up them, a bent, veiled figure of great weariness. It was terrible to look forward to such truth, and the present was no better. She grasped at the past and dragged it up to her and looked at its faded prettiness, and would have kissed it, as though it had been a living thing. But she knew that it was dead and that what lived was horrible to her.

She wished that she might die, as she had often thought she might during the long summer months. In those days her eyes had filled with tears of pity for herself. They were dry now, for the suffering was real and the pain was in her bodily heart. Yet she was so strong, and she feared Paul Griggs with such an abject fear, that she played the comedy when she could not make him think that she was asleep.

"My only thought is for you," she said. "It is another burden on you."

He was utterly happy, and he laughed aloud.

"It is another reason for working," he said.

And even as he said it she saw the writing-table, the poor room, his stern, determined face and busy

hand, and herself seated in her own chair, with a half-read novel on her lap, staring at the grey future of mediocrity and mean struggling that loomed like a leaden figure above his bent head. Year after year, perhaps, she was to sit in that chair and watch the same silent battle for bare existence. It was too horrible to be borne. If only he were a man of genius, she could have suffered it all, she thought, and more also. But he himself said that he had no genius. His terrible mechanics of mind killed the little originality he had. His gloomy sobriety over his work made her desperate. But she feared him. The belief grew on her that if he ever found out that she did not love him, he would end life then, for them both — perhaps for them all three.

Surely, hell had no tortures worse than hers, she thought. Yet she bore them, in terror of him. And he was perfectly happy and suspected nothing. She could not understand how with his melancholy nature and his constant assertion that he had but a little talent and much industry for all his stock in trade, he could believe in his own future as he did. It was an anomaly, a contradiction of terms, a weak point in the low level of his unimaginative, dogged strength. She thought often of the poor book he had written. She had heard that talent was stirred to music by a great passion that strung it and struck it, till its heartstrings rang wild

changes and breathed deep chords, and burst into rushing harmonies of eloquence. But his love was dumb and dull, though it might be deadly. There had been neither eloquence nor music in his book. It had been an old story, badly told. He had said that he was only fit to be a newspaper man, and it was true, so far as she could see. His letters to the paper were excellent in their way, but that was all he could do. And she had given him, in the child, another reason for being what he was, hard-working, silent — dull.

She looked at him and wondered; for there was a mystery in his shadowy eyes and still face, which had promised much more than she had ever found in him. There was something mysterious and dreadful, too, in his unnatural strength. The fear of him grew upon her, and sometimes when he kissed her she burst into tears out of sheer terror at his touch.

"They are tears of happiness," she said, trembling and drying her eyes quickly.

She smiled, and he believed her, happier every day in her and in the child.

Then came the realization of the grey dream of misery. Again she was seated by the window in her accustomed chair, and he was in his place, pen in hand, eyes on paper, thoughts fixed like steel in that obstinate effort to do better, while she had the certainty of his failure before her. And between

them, in a straw cradle with a hood, all gauze and lace and blue ribbons, lay the thing that bound her to him and cut her off forever from the world, — little Walter Crowdie, the child without a name, as she called him in her thoughts. And above the child, between her and Paul Griggs, floated the little imaginary stage on which she was to go on acting her play over and over again till all was done. She had not even the right to shed tears for herself without telling him that they were for the happiness he expected of her.

He would not leave her. He had scarcely been out of the house for weeks, though the only perceptible effect of remaining indoors so long was that he had grown a little paler. She implored him to go out. In a few days she would be able to go with him, and meanwhile there was no reason why he should be perpetually at her side. He yielded to her importunity at last, and she was left alone with the child.

It was a relief even greater than she had anticipated. She could cry, she could laugh, she could sing, and he was not there to ask questions. For one moment after she had heard the outer door close behind him she almost hesitated as to which she should do, for she was half hysterical with the long outward restraint of herself while, inwardly, she had allowed her thoughts to run wild as they would. She stood for a moment, and there was a

vague, uncertain look in her face. Then her breast heaved, and she burst into tears, weeping as never before in her short life, passionately, angrily, violently, without thought of control, or indeed of anything definite.

Before an hour had passed Griggs came back. She was seated quietly in her chair, as when he had left her. The light was all behind her, and he could not see the slight redness of her eyes. Pale as she was, he thought she had never been more beautiful. There was a gentleness in her manner, too, beyond what he was accustomed to. He believed that perhaps she might be the better for being left to herself for an hour or two every day, until she should be quite strong again. On the following day she again suggested that he should go out for a walk, and he made no objection.

Again, as soon as he was gone, she burst into tears, almost in spite of herself, though she unconsciously longed for the relief they had brought her the first time. But to-day the fit of weeping did not pass so soon. The spasms of sobbing lasted long after her eyes were dry, and she had less time to compose herself before Griggs returned. Still, he noticed nothing. The tears had refreshed her, and he found that same gentleness which had touched him on the previous day.

Several times, after that, he went out and left her alone in the afternoon. Then, one day, while

he was walking, a heavy shower came on, and he made his way home as fast as he could. He opened the door quickly and came upon her to find her sobbing as though her heart would break.

He turned very pale and stood still for a moment. There was terror in her face when she saw him, but in an instant he was holding her in his arms and kissing her hair, asking her what was the matter.

"I am a millstone around your neck!" she sobbed. "It is breaking my heart — I shall die, if I see you working so!"

He tried to comfort her, soothing her and laughing at her fears for him, but believing her, as he always did. Little by little, her sobs subsided, and she was herself again, as far as he could see. He tried to argue the case fairly on its merits.

She listened to him, and listening was a new torture, knowing as she did what her tears were shed for. But she had to play the comedy again, at short notice, not having had the time to compose herself and enjoy the relief she found in crying alone.

It was a relief which she sought again and again. When she thought of it afterwards, it was as an indescribable, half-painful, half-pleasant emotion through which she passed every day. When she felt that it was before her, as soon as Griggs was out of the house, she made a slight effort

to resist it, for she was sensible enough to understand that it was becoming a habit which she could not easily break.

Even after she was quite strong again, Griggs often left her to herself for an hour, and he did not again come in accidentally and find her in tears. He thought it natural that she should sometimes wish to be alone.

One day, when she had dried her eyes, she took a sheet of paper from his table and began to write. She had no distinct intention, but she knew that she was going to write about herself and her sufferings. It gave her a strange and unhealthy pleasure to set down in black and white all that she suffered. She could look at it, turn it, change it, and look at it again. Constantly, as the pen ran on, the tears came to her eyes afresh, and she brushed them away with a smile.

Then, all at once, she looked at the clock — the same cheap little American clock which had ticked so long on the mantelpiece in Griggs's old lodging upstairs. She knew that he would be back before long, and she tore the sheets she had covered into tiny strips and threw them into the waste-paper basket. When Griggs returned, she was singing softly to herself over her needlework.

But she had enjoyed a rare delight in writing down the story of her troubles. The utter loneliness of her existence, when Griggs was not with

her, made it natural enough. Then a strange thought crossed her mind. She would write to Reanda and tell him that she had forgiven him, and had expiated the wrong she had done him. She craved the excitement of confession, and it could do no harm. He might, perhaps, answer her. Griggs would never know, for she always received the letters and sorted them for him, merely to save him trouble. The correspondence of a newspaper man is necessarily large, covering many sources of his information.

It was rather a wild idea, she thought, but it attracted her, or rather it distracted her thoughts by taking her out of the daily comedy she was obliged to keep up. There was in it, too, a very slight suggestion of danger; for it was conceivable, though almost impossible, that some letter of hers or her husband's might fall into Griggs's hands. There was a perverseness about it which was seductive to her tortuous mind.

At the first opportunity she wrote a very long letter. It was the letter of a penitent. She told him all that she had told herself a hundred times, and it was a very different production from the one she had sent to her father nearly a year earlier. There were tears in the phrases, there were sobs in the broken sentences. And there were tears in her own eyes when she sealed it.

She was going to ring for the woman servant

to take it, and her hand was on the bell. She paused, looked at the addressed envelope, glanced furtively round the room, and then kissed it passionately. Then she rang.

Griggs came home later than usual, but he thought she was preoccupied and absent-minded.

"Has anything gone wrong?" he asked anxiously.

"Wrong?" she repeated. "Oh no!" She sighed. "It is the same thing. I am always anxious about you. You were a little pale before you went out and you had hardly eaten anything at breakfast."

"There is nothing the matter with me," laughed Griggs. "I am indestructible. I defy fate."

She started perceptibly, for she was too much of an Italian not to be a little superstitious.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Stefanone was often seen in the Via della Frezza, for the host of the little wine shop was one of his good customers. The neighbourhood was very quiet and respectable, and the existence of the wine shop was a matter of convenience and almost of necessity to the respectable citizens who dwelt there. They sent their women servants or came themselves at regular hours, bringing their own bottles and vessels of all shapes and of many materials for the daily allowance of wine ; they invariably paid in cash, and they never went away in the summer. The business was a very good one ; for the Romans, though they rarely drink too much and are on the whole a sober people, consume an amount of strong wine which would produce a curious effect upon any other race, in any other climate. Stefanone, though his wife had formerly thought him extravagant, had ultimately turned out to be a very prudent person, and in the course of a thirty years' acquaintance with Rome had selected his customers with care, judgment, and foresight. Whenever he was in Rome and had time to spare he came to the little shop in the Via

della Frezza. He had stood godfather for one of the host's children, which in those days constituted a real tie between parents and god-parents.

But he had another reason for his frequent visits since that night on which he had accompanied Gloria and had shielded her from the rain with his gigantic brass-tipped umbrella. He took an interest in her, and would wait a long time in the hope of seeing her, sitting on a rush-bottomed stool outside the wine shop, and generally chewing the end of a wisp of broom. He had the faculty of sitting motionless for an hour at a time, his sturdy white-stockinged legs crossed one over the other, his square peasant's hands crossed upon his knee, — the sharp angles of the thumb-bones marked the labouring race, — his soft black hat tilted a little forward over his eyes, his jacket buttoned up when the weather was cool, thrown back and showing the loosened shirt open far below the throat when the day was warm.

Gloria reminded him of Dalrymple. The process of mind was a very simple one and needs no analysis. He had sought Dalrymple for years, but in vain, and Gloria had something in her face which recalled her father, though the latter's features were rough and harshly accentuated. Stefanone had made the acquaintance of the one-eyed cobbler without difficulty and had ascertained that there was a mystery about Gloria, whom the cob-

bler had first seen on the morning after Stefanone had met her in the storm. It was of course very improbable that she should be the daughter of Dalrymple and Annetta, but even the faint possibility of being on the track of his enemy had a strong effect upon the unforgiving peasant. If he ever found Dalrymple, he intended to kill him. In the meanwhile he had found a simple plan for finding out whether Gloria was the Scotchman's daughter or not. He waited patiently for the spring, and he came to Rome now every month for a week at a time.

More than once during the past year he had brought small presents of fruit and wine and country cakes for Gloria, and both she and Griggs knew all about him, and got their wine from the little shop which he supplied. Gloria was pleased by the decent, elderly peasant's admiration of her beauty, which he never failed to express when he got a chance of speaking to her. When little Walter Crowdie was first carried out into the sun, Stefanone was in the street, and he looked long and earnestly into the baby's face.

"There is the same thing in the eyes," he muttered, as he turned away, after presenting the nurse with a beautiful jumble, which looked as though it had been varnished, and was adorned with small drops of hard pink sugar. "If it is he — an evil death on him and all his house."

And he strolled slowly back to the wine shop, his hand fumbling with the big, curved, brass-handled knife which he carried in the pocket of his blue cloth breeches.

He was certainly mistaken about the baby's eyes, which were remarkably beautiful and of a very soft brown ; whereas Dalrymple's were hard, blue, and steely, and it was not possible that anything like an hereditary expression should be recognizable in the face of a child three weeks old. But his growing conviction made his imagination complete every link which chanced to be missing in the chain.

One day, in the spring, he met Griggs when the latter was going out alone.

"A word, Signore, if you permit," he said politely.

"Twenty," replied Griggs, giving the common Roman answer.

"Signore, Subiaco is a beautiful place," said the peasant. "In spring it is an enchantment. In summer, I tell you nothing. It is as fresh as Paradise. There is water, water, as much as you please. Wine is not wanting, and it seems that you know that. The butcher kills calves twice a week, and sometimes an ox when there is an old one, or one lame. Eh, in Subiaco, one is well."

"I do not doubt it when I look at you," answered Griggs, without a smile.

"Thanks be to Heaven, my health still assists me. But I am thinking of you and of your beautiful lady and of that little angel, whom God preserve In truth, you appear to me as the Holy Family. I should not say it to every one, but the air of Subiaco is thin, the water is light, and, for a house, mine is of the better ones. One knows that we are country people, but we are clean people; there are neither chickens nor children. If you find a flea, I will have him set in gold. You shall say, 'This is the flea that was found in Stefanone's house.' In that way every one will know. I do not speak of the beds. The pope could sleep in the one in the large room at the head of the staircase, the pope with all his cardinals. They would say, 'Now we know that this is indeed a bed.' Do you wish better than this? I do not know. But if you will bring your lady and the baby, you will see. Eyes tell no lies."

"And the price?" inquired Griggs, struck by the good sense of the suggestion.

"Whatever you choose to give. If you give nothing, we shall have had your company. In general, we take three pauls a day, and we give the wine. You shall make the price as you like it. Who thinks of these things? We are Christians."

When Griggs spoke of the project to Gloria, she embraced it eagerly. He said that he should be obliged to come to Rome every week on account of

his correspondence. But Subiaco was no longer as inaccessible as formerly, and there was now a good carriage road all the way and a daily public conveyance. He should be absent three days, and would spend the other four with her.

It was a sacrifice on his part, as she guessed from the way in which he spoke, but it was clearly necessary that Gloria and the child should have country air during the coming summer. He had often reproached himself with not having made some such arrangement for the preceding hot season, but he had seen that she did not suffer from the heat, and his presence in the capital had been very necessary for his work. Now, however, it looked possible enough, and before Stefanone went back to the country for his next trip a preliminary agreement had been made.

Gloria looked forward with impatience to the liberty she was to gain by his regular absences, for her life was becoming unbearable. She felt that she could not much longer sustain the perpetual comedy she was acting, unless she could get an interval of rest from time to time. At first, the hour he gave her daily when he went out alone had been a relief and had sufficed. The tears she shed, the letters she wrote to Reanda, rested her and refreshed her. For she had written others since that first one, though he had never answered any of them. But the small daily interruption of

her acting was no longer enough. The taste of liberty had bred an intense craving for more of it, and she dreamed of being alone for days together.

She wrote to Reanda now without the slightest hope of receiving any reply, as madmen sometimes write endless letters to women they love, though they have never exchanged a word with them. It was a vent for her pent-up suffering. It could make no difference, and Griggs could never know. Her strange position put the point of faithfulness out of the question. She was in love with her husband, and the man who loved her held her to her play of love by the terror she felt of what lay behind his gentleness. She dreamed once that he had found out the truth, and was tearing her head from her body with those hands of his, slowly, almost gently, with mysterious eyes and still face. She woke, and found that the heavy tress of her hair was twisted round her throat and was choking her; but the impression remained, and her dread of Griggs increased, and it became harder and harder to act her part.

At the same time the attraction of secretly writing to her husband grew stronger, day by day. She did not send him all she wrote, nor a tenth part of all, and the greater portion of her outpourings went into the fire, or they were torn to infinitesimal bits and thrown into the waste-paper basket. She was critical, in a strangely morbid way, of what she

wrote. The fact that she was acting for Griggs, and knew it, made her dread to write anything to Reanda which could possibly seem insincere. No aspiring young author ever took greater pains over his work than she sometimes bestowed upon the composition of these letters, or judged his work more conscientiously and severely than she. And the result was that she told of her life with wonderful sincerity and truth. Truth was her only luxury in the midst of the great lie she had to sustain. She revelled in it, and yet, fearing to lose it, she used it with a conscientiousness which she had never exhibited in anything she had done before. It was her single delight, and she treasured it with scrupulous and miserly care. In her letters, at least, she could be really herself.

But the strain was telling upon her visibly, and Griggs was very anxious about her, and hastened their departure for Subiaco as soon as the weather began to grow warm, hoping that the mountain air would bring the colour back to her pale cheeks. For her beauty's sake, he could almost have deprecated the prospect, strange to say, for she had never seemed more perfectly beautiful than now. She was thinner than she had formerly been, and her pallor had refined her by softening the look of hard and brilliant vitality which had characterized her before she had left Reanda. There is perhaps no beauty which is not beautified by a

touch of sadness. Griggs saw it, and while his eyes rejoiced, his heart sank.

He knew what an utterly lonely life she was leading, even as he judged her existence, and the tender string was touched in his deep nature. She had sacrificed everything for him, as he told himself many a time in his solitary walks. All the love he had given and had to give could never repay her for what she had given him. Marriage, he reflected, was often a bargain, but such devotion as hers was a gift for which there could be no return. She had ruined herself in the eyes of the world for him, but the world would never accuse him, nor shut its doors upon him because he had accepted what she had so freely given. He was not an emotional man, but even he longed for some turn of life in which for her sake he might do something above the dead level of that commonplace heroism which begins in hard work and ends in the attainment of ordinary necessities. He felt his strength in him and about him, and he wished that he could let it loose upon some adversary in the physical satisfaction of fighting for what he loved. It was not a high aspiration, but it was a manly one.

He drew upon his resources to the utmost, in order to make her comfortable in Subiaco when they should get there. He was not a dreamer, though he dreamed when he had time. It was his nature to take all the things which came to him to

be done and to do them one after another with untiring energy. He worked at his correspondence, and got additional articles to write for periodicals, though it was no easy matter in that day when the modern periodical was in its infancy.

Gloria, acting her part, complained sadly that he worked too hard. Work as he might, he had no such stress to fear as was wearing out her life. She hated him, she feared him, and she envied him. Sometimes she pitied him, and then it was easier for her to act the play. As for Griggs, he laughed and told her for the hundredth time that he was indestructible and defied fate.

So far as he could see what he had to deal with, he could defy anything. But there was that beyond of which he could not dream, and destiny, with leaden hands, was already upon him, on the day when a great, old-fashioned carriage, loaded with boxes and belongings, brought him and his to the door of Stefanone's house in Subiaco.

Sora Nanna, grey-haired, and withered as a brown apple, but tough as leather still, stood on the threshold to receive them. She no longer wore the embroidered napkin on her hair, for civilization had advanced a generation in Subiaco, and a coloured handkerchief flapped about her head, and she had caught one corner of it in her teeth to keep it out of her eyes, as the afternoon breeze blew it across her leathery face.

First at the door of the carriage she saw the baby, held up by its nurse, and the old woman threw up her hands and clapped them, and crowed to the child till it laughed. Then Griggs got out. And then, out of the dark shadow of the coach, a face looked at Sora Nanna, and it was a face she had known long ago, with dark eyes, beautiful and deadly pale, and very fateful.

She turned white herself, and her teeth chattered.

"Madonna Santissima!" she cried, shrinking back.

She crossed herself, and did not dare to meet Gloria's eyes again for some time.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Sora Nanna showed her new lodgers their rooms. They were the ones Dalrymple had occupied long ago, together with a third, opening separately from the same landing. In what had been the Scotchman's laboratory, and which was now turned into a small bedroom, a large chest stood in a corner, of the sort used by the peasant women to this day for their wedding outfits.

"If it is not in your way, I will leave it here," said Sora Nanna. "There are certain things in it."

"What things?" asked Gloria, idly, and for the sake of making acquaintance with the woman, rather than out of curiosity.

"Things, things," answered Nanna. "Things of that poor girl's. We had a daughter, Signora."

"Did she die long ago?" inquired Gloria, in a tone of sympathy.

"We lost her, Signora," said Nanna, simply. "Look at these beds! They are new, new! No one has ever slept in them. And linen there is, as much as you can ask for. We are country people, Signora, but we are good people. I do not

say that we are rich. One knows — in Rome everything is beautiful. Even the chestnuts are of gold. Here, we are in the country, Signora. You will excuse, if anything is wanting."

But Gloria was by no means inclined to find fault. She breathed more freely in the mountain air, she was tired with the long drive from Tivoli, where they had spent the previous night, and she was more hungry than she had been for a long time.

It was not dark when they sat down to supper in the old guest chamber which opened upon the street. Nanna was anxious and willing to bring them their supper upstairs, but Gloria preferred the common room. She said it would amuse her, and in reality it was easier for her not to be alone with Griggs, and by going downstairs on the first evening she meant to establish a precedent for the whole summer. He had told her that he must go back to Rome for his work on the next day but one, and she counted the hours before her up to the minute when she should be free and alone.

They sat down at the old table at which Dalrymple had eaten his solitary meals so often, more than twenty years earlier. There was no change. There were the same solid, old-fashioned silver forks and spoons, there were plates of the same coarse china, tumblers of the same heavy pressed glass. Had Dalrymple been there, he would have recognized the old brass lamp with its three beaks

which poor Annetta had so often brought in lighted when he sat there at dusk. On the shelf in the corner were the selfsame decanters full of transparent aniseed and pink alchermes and coarse brown brandy. Stefanone came in, laid his hat upon the bench, and put his stick in the corner just as he had always done. There was no change, except that Annetta was not there, and the husband and wife had grown almost old since those days.

"How often does the post go to Rome?" Gloria asked of Sora Nanna, while they were at supper.

"Every evening, at one of the night, Signora. There are also many occasions of sending by the carters."

"I can write to you every day when you are away," said Gloria in English to Griggs.

She was thinking of those letters which she wrote to Reanda almost in spite of herself, but the loving smile did not play her false, and Griggs believed her.

In her, the duality of her being had created two distinct lives. For him, the two elements of consciousness and perception were merged in one by his love. All that he felt he saw in her, and all that he saw in her he felt. The perfection of love, while it lasts, is in that double certainty from within and from without, which, if once disturbed, can never be restored again. Singly,

the one part or the other may remain as of old, but the wholeness of the two has but one chance of life.

On that first night Gloria had an evil dream. She had fallen asleep, tired from the journey and worn out with the endless weariness of her secret suffering. She awoke in the small hours, and moonlight was streaming into the room. She was startled to find herself in a strange place, at first, and then she realized where she was, and gazed at the clouded panes of common glass as her head lay on the pillow, and she marked the moonlight on the brick floor by the joints of the bricks, and watched how it crept silently away. For the moon was waning, and had not long risen above the black line of the hills.

Her eyelids drooped, but she saw it all distinctly still — more distinctly than before, she thought. The level light rose slowly from the floor; very, very slowly, stiff and straight as a stark, shrouded corpse, and stood upright between her and the window. She felt the heavy hair rising on her scalp, and an intense horror took possession of her body, and thrilled through her from head to foot and from her feet to her head. But she could not move. She felt that something held her and pressed on her, as though the air were moulded about her like cast iron.

The thing stood between her and the window,

stiff and white. It showed its face, and the face was white, too. It was Angelo Reanda. She knew it, though there seemed to be no eyes in the white thing. She felt its dead voice speaking to her.

"An evil death on you and all your house," it said.

The face was gone again, but the thing was still there. Very, very slowly, stiff and white, it lay back, straight from the heel upwards, unbending as it sank, till it laid itself upon the floor, and she was staring at the joints of the bricks in the moonlight.

Then she shrieked aloud and awoke. The moonlight had moved a foot or more, and she knew that she had been asleep.

"It was only a dream," she said to Griggs in the morning. "I thought I saw you dead, dear. It frightened me."

"I am not dead yet," he laughed. "It was that salad — there were potatoes in it."

She turned away; for the contrast between the triviality of what he said and the horror of what she had felt brought an expression to her face which even her consummate art could not have concealed.

The impression lasted all day, and when she went to bed she carefully closed the shutters so that the moonlight should not fall upon the floor. The dream did not return.

"It must have been the salad," said Griggs, when she told him that she had not been disturbed again.

But Gloria was thinking of death, and his words jarred upon her horribly, as a trivial jest would jar on a condemned man walking from his cell to the scaffold. In the evening Griggs went by the diligence to Rome, and Gloria was left alone with her child and the nurse.

Then she sat down and wrote to Reanda with a full heart and a trembling hand. She told him of her dream, and how the fear of his death had broken her nerves. She implored him to come out and see her when Griggs was in Rome. She could let him know when to start, if he would write one word. It was but a little journey, she said, and the cool mountain air would do him good. But if he would not come, she besought him to write to her, if it were only a line, to say that he was alive. She could not forget the dream until she should know that he was safe.

She was not critical of her writing any more, for she was no longer in fear of being misunderstood, and she wrote desperately. It seemed to her that she was writing with her blood. She had sent him many letters without hope of answer, but something told her that she could not appeal in vain forever, and that he would at last reply to her.

Two days passed, and she spent much of her

time with the child. She felt that in time she might love it, if Griggs were not beside her. Then he came back, and in the great joy of seeing her again after that first short separation, the stern voice grew as soft as a woman's, and the still face was moved. She had looked forward with dread to his return, and she shrank when he touched her; she would have given all she had if only he would not kiss her. Then, when she felt that he might have found her cold to him at the first moment, that he might guess, that he might find out her secret, she shivered again from head to heel, in fear of him, and she forced the smile upon her face with all her will.

"I am so glad, that I am almost frightened!" she cried, and lest the smile should be imperfect, she hid it against his shoulder.

She could have bitten the cloth and the tough arm under it, as she felt him kiss the back of her neck just at the roots of the hair; as it was, she grasped his arm convulsively.

"How strong you are!" he laughed, as he felt the pressure of her fingers.

"Yes," she answered. "It is the mountain air — and you," she added.

And, as ever, it seemed to him true. The days he spent with her were heavenly to him as they were days of living earthly hell to her. He did not even leave her alone for an hour or two, as he

had done in the city, for when he was in Rome without her he did double work and shortened his sleep by half, that he might lengthen the time he was to have with her. The heat of the capital and the late hours brought out dark shadows under his eyes, and gave her another excuse for saying that he was overworking for her sake, and that she was a burden upon him — she and the child.

On the morning before he next went to Rome, she received a letter from Reanda. The blood rushed scarlet to her face, but Griggs was busy with his own letters and did not see it.

She went to the baby's room. The child had been taken out by the nurse, and she sat down in the nurse's chair by the empty cradle and broke the seal of the note. There was a big sheet of paper inside, on which were written these lines in the artist's small, nervous handwriting: —

"I am perfectly well, but I understand your anxiety about my health. I do not wish to see you, but as human life is uncertain I have given instructions that you may be at once informed of the good news of my death, if you outlive me."

Gloria's hand closed upon the sheet of paper, and she reeled forward and sideways in the chair, as though she had received a stunning blow. She heard heavy footsteps on the brick floor in the next room and with a desperate effort at consciousness she hid the crumpled letter in her bosom before the

door opened. But the room swam with her as she grasped the straw cradle and tried to steady herself.

In an agony of terror she heard the footsteps coming nearer and nearer, then retreating again, then turning back towards her. She prayed to God at that moment that Griggs might not open the door. To gain strength, she forced herself to rise to her feet and stand upright, but with the first step she took, she stumbled against the chest that contained Annetta's belongings. The physical pain roused her. She drew breath more freely, and listened. Griggs was moving about in the other room, probably putting together some few things which he meant to take to Rome with him that evening. It seemed an hour before she heard him go away, and the echo of his footsteps came more and more faintly as he went down the stairs. He evidently had not guessed that she was in the little room which served as a nursery — the room which had once been Dalrymple's laboratory.

She did not read the letter again, but she found a match and set fire to it, and watched it as it burned to black, gossamer-like ashes on the brick floor. It was long before she had the courage to go down and face Griggs and say that she was ready for the daily walk together before the midday meal. And all that day she went about dreamily, scarcely knowing what she did or said, though she was sure that she did not fail in acting her part, for the

habit was so strong that the acting was natural to her, except when something waked her to herself too suddenly.

He went away at last in the evening, and she was free to do what she pleased with herself, to close the deadly wound she had received, if that were possible, to forget it even for an hour, if she could.

But she could not. She felt that it was her death-wound, for it had killed a hope which she had tended and fostered into an inner life for herself. She felt that her husband hated her, as she hated Paul Griggs.

She was impelled to fall upon her knees and pray to Something, somewhere, though she knew not what, but she was ashamed to do it when she thought of her life. That Something would turn upon her and curse her, as Reanda had cursed her in her dream — and in the cruel words he had written.

She hardly slept that night, and she rose in the morning heavy-eyed and weary. Going out into the old garden behind the house she met Sora Nanna with a basket of clothes on her head, just starting to go up to the convent, followed by two of her women.

"Signora," said the old woman, with her leathern smile, "you are consuming yourself because the husband is in Rome. You are doing wrong."

Gloria started, stared at her, and then understood, and nodded.

"Come up to the convent with us," said Nanna. "You will divert yourself, and while they take in the clothes, I will show you the church. It is beautiful. I think that even in Rome it would be a beautiful church. I will show you where the sisters are buried and I will tell you how Sister Maria Addolorata was burned in her cell. But she was not buried with the rest. When you come back, you will eat with a double appetite, and I will make gnocchi of polenta for dinner. Do you like gnocchi, Signora? There is much resistance in them."

Gloria went with the washerwomen. She was strong and kept pace with them, burdened as they were with their baskets. It was good to be with them, common creatures with common, human hearts, knowing nothing of her strange trouble. Sora Nanna took her into the church and showed her the sights, explaining them in her strident, nasal voice without the slightest respect for the place so long as no religious service was going on. The woman showed her the little tablet erected in memory of Maria Addolorata, and she told the story as she had heard it, and dwelt upon the funeral services and the masses which had been said.

"At least, she is in peace," said Gloria, in a low voice, staring at the tablet.

"Let us not speak of the dead." — Vol. II., p. 203.

"Poor Annetta used to say that Sister Maria Addolorata sinned in her throat," said Nanna. "But you see. God can do everything. She went straight from her cell to heaven. Eh, she is in peace, Signora, as you say. Requiesca'. Come, Signora, it takes at least three-quarters of an hour to make gnocchi."

And they did not know. She was standing on her daughter's grave, and the tablet was a memorial of the mother of the woman beside her.

"You make me think of her, Signora," said the peasant. "You have her face. If you had her voice, to sing, I should think that you were she, returned from the dead."

"Could she sing?" asked Gloria, dreamily, as they left the church.

"Like the angels in Paradise," answered Nanna. "I think that now, when she sings, they are ashamed and stand silent to listen to her. If God wills that I make a good death, I shall hear her again."

She glanced at her companion's dreamy, fateful face.

"Let us not speak of the dead!" she concluded. "To-day we will make gnocchi of polenta."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

In the afternoon Gloria called Sora Nanna to move the chest against which she had stumbled in the morning. It would be more convenient, she said, to put it under the bed, if it could not be taken away altogether. It was a big, old-fashioned chest of unpainted, unvarnished wood, brown with age, and fastened by a hasp, through which a splinter of white chestnut wood had been stuck instead of a padlock. Gloria saw that it was heavy, as Sora Nanna dragged it and pushed it across the room. She remarked that, if it held only clothes, it must be packed very full.

Sora Nanna, glad to rest from her efforts, stood upright with her hand on her hip and took breath.

"Signora," she said, "who knows what is in it? Things, certain things! There are the clothes of that poor girl. This I know. And then, certain other things. Who knows what is in it? It may be a thousand years since I looked. Signora, shall we open it? But I think there are certain things that belonged to the Englishman."

"The Englishman?" asked Gloria, with some curiosity.

She was glad of anything which could interest her a little. For the moment she had not yet the courage to begin to write again after Reanda's message. Anything which had power to turn the current of her thoughts was a relief. She was sitting in the same chair beside the cradle in which she had sat in the morning, for she had called Nanna to move the box at a time when the child had been taken out for its second airing. She leaned back, resting her auburn hair against the bare wall, the waxen whiteness of her face contrasting with the bluish whitewash.

"What Englishman?" she asked again, wearily, but with a show of interest in her half-closed eyes.

"Who knows? An Englishman. They called him Sor Angoscia." Nanna sat down on the heavy box, and dropped her skinny hands far apart upon her knees. "We have cursed him much. He took our daughter. It was a night of evil. In that night the abbess died, and Sister Maria Addolorata was burned in her cell, and the Englishman took our daughter. He took our one daughter, Signora. We have not seen her more, not even her little finger. It will be twenty-two years on the eve of the feast of St. Luke. That is in October, Signora. He took our daughter. Poor little one! She was young, young — perhaps she did not know what she did."

Gloria leaned forward, resting her chin in her

hand and her elbow on her knee, gazing at the old woman.

"She was a flower," said Nanna, simply. "He tore her from us with the roots. Who knows what he did with her? She will be dead by this time. May the Madonna obtain grace for her! Signora, she seemed one of those flowers that grow on the hillside, just as God wills. Rain, sun, she was always fresh. Then came the storm. Who could find her any more? Poor little one!"

"Poor child!" exclaimed Gloria.

And she made Nanna tell all she knew, and how they had found the girl's peasant dress in a corner of that very room.

"Signora, if you wish to see, I will content you," said Nanna, rising at last.

She opened the box. It exhaled the peculiar odour of heavy cloth which has been worn and has then been kept closely shut up for years. On the top lay Annetta's carpet apron. Nanna held it up, and there were tears in her eyes, glistening on her dry skin like water in a crevice of brown rock.

"Signora, there are moths in it, see! Who cares for these things? They are a memory. And this is her skirt, and this is her bodice. Eh, it was beautiful once. The shoes, Signora, I wore them, for we had the same feet. What would you? It seemed a sin to let them mould, because they were hers. The apron, too, I might have worn it. Who

knows why I did not wear it? It was the affection. We are all so, we women. And now there are moths in it. I might have worn it. At least it would not have been lost."

Gloria peered into the box, and saw under the clothes a number of books packed neatly with a box made of English oak. She stretched down her hand and took one of the volumes. It was an English medical treatise. She looked at the fly-leaf.

A loud cry from Gloria startled the old woman.

"Angus Dalrymple — but —" Gloria read the name and stared at Nanna.

"Eh, eh!" assented Nanna, nodding violently and smiling a little as she at last recognized the Scotchman's name which she had never been able to pronounce. "Yes — that is it. That was the name of the Englishman. An evil death on him and all his house! Stefanone says it always. I also may say it once. It was he. He took our daughter. Stefanone went after them, but they had the beast of the convent gardener. It was a good beast, and they made it run. Stefanone heard of them all the way to the sea, but the twenty-four hours had passed, and the war-ship was far out. He could see it. Could he go to the war-ship? It had cannons. They would have killed him. Then I should have had neither daughter nor husband. So he came back."

The long habit of acting had made Gloria strong,

but her hands shook on the closed volume. She had known that her mother had been an Italian, that they had left Italy suddenly and had been married on board an English man-of-war by the captain, that same Walter Crowdie, a relative of Dalrymple's, after whom Gloria and Griggs had named the child. More than that Dalrymple had never been willing to tell her. She remembered, too, that though she had once or twice begged him to take her to Tivoli and Subiaco, he had refused rather abruptly. It was clear enough now. Her mother had been this Annetta whom Dalrymple had stolen away in the night.

And the wrinkled, leathery old hag, with her damp, coarse mouth, her skinny hands, and her cunning, ignorant eyes, was her grandmother — Stefanone was her grandfather — her mother had been a peasant, like them, beautified by one of nature's mad miracles.

There could be no doubt about it. That was the truth, and it fell upon her with its cruel, massive weight, striking her where many other truths had struck her before this one, in her vanity.

She grasped the book tightly with both hands and set her teeth. After that, she did not know what Nanna said, and the old woman, thinking Gloria was not paying a proper attention to her remarks, pushed and heaved the box across the room rather discontentedly. It would not go under

the bed, being too high, so she wedged it in between the foot of the bedstead and the wall. There was just room for it there.

"Signora, if ever your one child leaves you without a word, you will understand," said Nanna, a little offended at finding no sympathy.

"I understand too well," answered Gloria.

Then she suddenly realized what the woman wanted, and with great self-control she held out her hand kindly. Nanna took it and smiled, and pressed it in her horny fingers.

"You are young, Signora. When you are old, you will understand many things, when evils have pounded your heart in a mortar. Oil is sweet, vinegar is sour; with both one makes salad. This is our life. Rest yourself, Signora, for you walked well this morning. I go."

Gloria felt the pressure of the rough fingers on hers, after Nanna had left her. The acrid odour of peeled vegetables clung to her own hand, and she rose and washed it carefully, though she was scarcely conscious of what she was doing. Suddenly she dropped the towel and went back to the box. It had crossed her mind that the single book she had opened might have been borrowed from her father and that she might find another name in the others — that Nanna might have been mistaken in thinking that she recognized the English name — that it might all be a mistake, after all.

With violent hands she dragged out the moth-eaten clothes and threw them behind her upon the floor, and seized the books, opening them desperately one after the other. In each there was the name, 'Angus Dalrymple,' in her father's firm young handwriting of twenty years ago. She threw them down and lifted out the oak box. A little brass plate was let into the lid, and bore the initials, 'A. D.' There was no doubt left. The books all bore dates prior to 1844, the year in which, as she knew, her father had been married. It was impossible to hesitate, for the case was terribly clear.

She rose to her feet and carried the box to the window and set it upon a chair, sitting down upon another before it. It was not locked. She raised the lid, and saw that it was a medicine chest. There was a drawer, or little tray, on the top, full of small boxes and very minute vials, lying on their sides. Lifting this out, she saw a number of little stoppered bottles set in holes made in a thin piece of board for a frame. One was missing, and there were eleven left. She counted them mechanically, not knowing why she did so. Then she took them out and looked at the labels. The first she touched contained spirits of camphor. It chanced to be the only one of which the contents were harmless. The others were strong tinctures and acids, vegetable poisons, belladonna, aconite,

and the like, sulphuric acid, nitric acid, hydrochloric acid, and others.

Gloria looked at them curiously and set them back, one by one, put in the little tray and closed the lid. Then she sat still a long time and gazed out of the window at the rugged line of the hills.

Between her and the pale sky she saw her own life, and the hideous failure of it all, culminating in the certainty that she was of the blood of the old peasant couple to whose house a seeming chance had brought her to die. She felt that she could not live, and would not live if she could. It was all too wildly horrible, too utterly desolate.

The only human being that clung to her was the one of all others whom she most feared and hated, whose very touch sent a cold shiver through her. She and fate together had pounded her heart in a mortar, as the old woman had said. With a bitterness that sickened her she thought of her brief married life, of her poor social ambition, of her hopeless efforts to be some one amongst the great. What could she be, the daughter of peasants, what could she have ever been? Probably some one knew the truth about her, in all that great society. Such things might be known. Francesca Campodonico's delicate noble face rose faintly between her and the sky, and she realized with excruciating suddenness the distance that separated her from the

woman she hated, the woman who perhaps knew that Gloria Dalrymple was the daughter of a peasant and a fit wife by her birth for Angelo Reanda, the steward's son.

The ruin of her life spread behind her and before her. She could not face it. The confusion of it all seemed to blind her, and the confusion was pierced by the terrible thought that on the next day but one Griggs would return again, the one being who would not leave her, who believed in her, who worshipped her, and whom she hated for himself and for the destruction of her existence which had come by him.

In the box before her was death, painful perhaps, but sure as the grave itself. She was not a coward, except when she was afraid of Paul Griggs, and the fear lest he, too, should find out the truth was worse than the fear of mortal pain.

She sat still in her place, staring out of the window. After a long time, the nurse came in, carrying the child asleep in her arms, covered with a thin gauze veil. Gloria started, and then smiled mechanically as she had trained herself to smile whenever the child was brought to her. The nurse laid the small thing in its cradle, and Gloria, as in a dream, put the books and the clothes back into the box, and was glad that the nurse asked no questions. When she had shut down the lid, she rose to her feet and saw that she had left the

medicine chest on the chair. She took it into the bedroom and set it upon the table.

Then she sat down and wrote to Reanda. There was no haste in the writing, and her head was clear and cool, for she was not afraid. Griggs could not return for two days, and she had plenty of time. She went over her story, as she had gone over it many times before in her letters. She told him all, but not the discovery she had just made. That should die with her, if it could. It would be easy enough, on the next day, when the nurse was out, to open the box again, and to tear out the fly-leaf from each book and so destroy the name. As for the medicine chest, Griggs might see that it had belonged to her father, but he would suppose that she had brought it amongst her belongings. He would never guess that it had lain hidden in the old box for more than twenty years. That was her plan, and it was simple enough. But she should have to wait until the next day. It was better so. She could think of what she was going to do, and nobody would disturb her. She finished her letter.

"You have killed me," she wrote at the end. "If I had not loved you to the very end, I would tell you that my death is on your soul. But it is not all your fault, if I have loved you to death. I would not die if I could be free in any other way, but I cannot live to be touched and caressed again by this man whom I loathe with all my soul. I

tell you that when he kisses me it is as though I were stung by a serpent of ice. It is for your sake that I hate him as I do. For your sake I have suffered hell on earth for more than a whole year. For your sake I die. I cannot live without you. I have told you so again and a hundred times again, and you have not believed me. You write to-day and you tell me that I shall be free, when you die, to marry Paul Griggs. I would rather marry Satan in hell. But I shall be free to-morrow, for I shall be dead. God will forgive me, for God knows what I suffer. Good-bye. I love you, Angelo. I shall love you to-morrow, when the hour comes, and after that I shall love you always. This is the end. Good-bye. I love you; I kiss your soul with my soul. Good-bye, good-bye.

"GLORIA."

She cut a lock from her auburn hair and twisted it round and round her wedding ring, and thrust it into the envelope.

CHAPTER XL.

Two days later, Paul Griggs stood beside Gloria. She was not dead yet, but no earthly power could save her. She lay white and motionless on the high trestle bed, unconscious of his presence. They had sent a messenger for him, and he had come. The door was locked. Stefanone and his wife whispered together on the landing. In the third room, beyond, the nurse was shedding hysterical tears over the sleeping child.

The strong man stood stone still with shadowy, unblinking eyes, gazing into the dying face. Not a muscle moved, not a feature was distorted, his breath was regular and slow, for his grief had taken hold upon his soul, and his body was unconscious of time, as though it were already dead.

She had suffered horrible agonies for two nights and one day, and now the end was very near, for the wracked nerves could no longer feel. She lay on her back, lightly covered, one white arm and hand above the coverlet, the other hidden beneath it.

The room was very hot, and the sun streamed through the narrow aperture of the nearly closed

shutters, and made a bright streak on the red bricks, for it was morning still.

The purple lids opened, and Gloria looked up. There was no shiver now, as she recognized the man she feared, for the nerves were almost dead. Perhaps there was less fear, for she knew that it was almost over. The dark eyes were fixed on his with a mysterious, wondering look.

He tried to speak, and his lips moved, but he could make no sound, and his chest heaved convulsively, once. He knew what she had done, for they had told him. He knew, now that he tried to speak and could not, that he was half killed by grief. She saw the effort and understood, and faintly smiled.

"Why?"

He wrenched the single broken word out of himself by an enormous effort, and his throat swelled and was dry. Suddenly a single great drop of sweat rolled down his pale forehead.

"I could not live," she answered, in a cool, far voice beyond suffering, and still she smiled.

"Why? Why?"

The repeated word broke out twice like two sobs, but not a feature moved. The dying woman's eyelids quivered.

"I was a burden to you," she said faintly and distinctly. "You are free now, you have — only the child."

His calm broke.

"Gloria, Gloria! In the name of God Almighty, do not leave me so!"

He clasped her in his arms and lifted her a little, pressing his lips to her face. She was inert as a statue. She feared him still, and she felt the shiver of horror at his touch, but it could not move her limbs any more. Her eyes opened and looked into his, very close, but his were shut. The mask was gone. The man's whole soul was in his agonized face, and his arm shook with her. Her mind was clear and she understood. She was still herself, acting her play out in the teeth of death.

"I could not live," she said. "I could not be a millstone, dragging you down, watching you as you killed yourself in working for me. It was to be one of us. It was better so."

In his agony he laid his head beside hers on the pillow.

"Gloria — for Christ's sake — don't leave me —" The deep moan came from his tortured heart.

"Bring — the child — Walter —" she said very faintly.

Even in death she could not bear to be alone with him. He straightened himself, stood up, and saw the light fading in her eyes. Then, indeed, a shiver ran through her and shook her. Then the lids opened wide, and she cried out loudly.

"Quick — I am going —"

Rather than that she should not have what she wished, he tore himself away and wrenched the door open, forgetting that it was locked.

"Bring the child!" he cried, into the face of old Nanna, who was standing there, and he pushed her towards the door of the other room with one hand, while he already turned back to Gloria.

He started, for she was sitting up, with wide eyes and outstretched hands, gazing at the patch of sunlight on the floor. Dying, she saw the awful vision of her dream again, rising stiff and stark from the bricks to its upright horror between her and the light. Her hands pointed at it and shook, and her jaw dropped, but she was motionless as she sat.

Nanna, sobbing, came in suddenly, holding up the little child straight before her, that it might see its mother before she was gone forever. The baby hands feebly beat its little sides, and it gasped for breath.

Words came from Gloria's open mouth, articulate, clear, but very far in sound.

"An evil death on you and all your house!" the words said, as though spoken by another.

The outstretched hands sank slowly, as the vision laid itself down before her, straight and corpse-like. The beautiful head fell back upon Griggs's arm, and the eyes met his.

Nanna prayed aloud, holding up the child me-

"The last great, true note died away."—Vol. II., p. 219.

chanically, and the small eyes were fixed, horror-struck, upon the bed. A low cry trembled in the air. Stefanone, his hat in his hand, stood against the door, bowed a little, as though he were in church. The cry came again. Then there was a sort of struggle.

In an instant Gloria was standing up on the bed to her full height. And the hot, still room rang with a burst of desperate, ear-breaking song, in majestic, passionate, ascending intervals.

"Calpasta il mio cadavere, ma salva il Trovator!"

The last great, true note died away. For one instant she stood up still, with outstretched hands, white, motionless. Then the flame in the dark eyes broke and went out, and Gloria fell down dead.

"Maria Addolorata! Maria Addolorata!" Nanna screamed in deadly terror, as she heard the transcendent voice that one time, like a voice from the grave.

She sank down, fainting upon the floor, and the little child rolled from her slackened arms upon the coarse bricks and lay on its face, moaning tremulously. No one heeded it.

Stefanone, with instinctive horror of death, turned and went blindly down the steps, not knowing what he had seen, the death notes still ringing in his ears.

On the bed, the man lay dumb upon the dead woman. Only the poor little child seemed to be alive, and clutched feebly at the coarse red bricks, and moaned and bruised its small face. It bore the slender inheritance of fatal life, the inheritance of vows broken and of faith outraged, and with it, perhaps, the implanted seed of a lifelong terror, not remembered, but felt throughout life, as real and as deadly as an inheritance of mortal disease. Better, perhaps, if death had taken it, too, to the lonely grave of the outcast and suicide woman, among the rocks, out of earshot of humanity. Death makes strange oversights and leaves strange gleanings for life, when he has reaped his field and housed his harvest.

They would not give Gloria Christian burial, for it was known throughout Subiaco that she had poisoned herself, and those were still the old days, when the Church's rules were the law of the people.

Paul Griggs took the body of the woman he had loved, and loved beyond death, and he laid her in a deep grave in a hollow of the hillside. Such words as he had to speak to those who helped him, he spoke quietly, and none could say that they had seen the still face moved by sorrow. But as they watched him, a human sort of fear took hold of them, at his great quiet, and they knew that his grief was beyond anything which could be shown or understood. It was night, and they filled the

grave after he had thrown earth into it with his hands. He sent them away, and they left him alone with the dead, leaving also one of their lanterns upon a stone near by.

All that night he lay on the grave, dumb. Then, when the dawn came upon him, he kissed the loose earth and stones, and got upon his feet and went slowly down the hillside to the town beyond the torrent. He went into the house noiselessly, and lay down upon the bed on which she had died. And so he did for two nights and two days. On the third, a great carriage came from Rome, bringing twelve men, singers of the Sistine Chapel and of the choir of Saint Peter's and of Saint John Lateran, twelve men having very beautiful voices, as sweet as any in the world. He had sent for them when he had been told that she could not have Christian burial.

They were talking and laughing together when they came, but when they saw his face they grew very quiet, and followed him in silence where he led them. Two little boys followed them, too, wondering what was to happen, and what the thirteen men were going to do, all dressed in black, walking so steadily together.

When they all came to the hollow in the hillside, they saw a mound, as of a grave, amidst the stones, and on it there lay a cross of black wood. The singers looked at one another in silence, and

they understood that whoever lay in the grave had been refused a place in the churchyard, for some great sin. But they said nothing. The man who led them stood still at the head of the cross and took off his hat, and looked at his twelve companions, who uncovered their heads. They had sheets of written music with them, and they passed them quietly about from one to another and looked towards one who was their leader.

Overhead, the summer sky was pale, and there were twin mountains of great clouds in the northwest, hiding the sun, and in the southeast, whence the parching wind was blowing in fierce gusts. It blew the dry dust from the clods of earth on the grave, and the dust settled on the black clothes of the men as they stood near.

The voices struck the first chord softly together, and the music for the dead went up to heaven, and was borne far across the torrent to the distance in the arms of the hot wind. And one voice climbed above the others, sweet and clear, as though to reach heaven itself; and another sank deep and true and soft in the full close of the stave, as though it would touch and comfort the heart that was quite still at last in the deep earth.

Then one who was young stood a little before the rest, a strong, pale singer, with an angel's voice. And he sang alone to the sky and the dusty rocks and the solemn grave. He sang the 'Cujus

animam gementem pertransivit gladius' of the Stabat Mater, as none had sung it before him, nor perhaps has ever sung it since that day — he alone, without other music.

They came also to the words 'Fac ut animæ donetur Paradisi gloria,' and the word was a name to him who listened silently in their midst.

Besides these they sang also a 'Miserere,' and last of all, 'Requiem eternam dona eis.'

Then there was silence, and they looked at the still face, as though asking what they should do. The mysterious eyes met theirs with shadows. The pale head bent itself in thanks, twice or thrice, but there were no words.

So they turned and left him there on the hillside, and went back to the town, awestruck by the vastness of the man's sorrow. And afterwards, for many years, when any of them heard of a great grief, he shook his head and said that he and those who had sung with him over a lonely grave in the mountains, alone knew what a man could feel and yet live.

And Paul Griggs lived through those days, and is still alive. His grief could not spend itself, but his stern strength took hold of life again, and he took the child with him and went back to Rome, to work for it from that time forward, and to shield it from evil if he could, and to bring it up to be a man, ignorant of what had happened in Subiaco

in those summer days, ignorant of the tie that made it his, to be a man free from the burden of past fates and sins and broken vows and trampled faith, and of the death his dead mother had died, having a clean name of his own, with which there could be no memories of misery and fear and horror.

He wrote a few short words to Angus Dalrymple, now Lord Redin at last, to tell him the truth as far as he knew it. The hand that had laboured so bravely for Gloria could hardly trace the words that told of her death.

Then, when the summer heat was passed, he took little Walter Crowdie with him, hiring an Englishwoman to tend the child, and he crossed the ocean and gave it to certain kinsfolk of his in America, telling them that it was the child of one who had been very dear to him, that he had taken it as his own, and would provide for it and take it back when it should be older. And so he did, and little Walter Crowdie grew up with an angel's voice, and other gifts which made him famous in his day. But many things happened before that time came.

He could do no better than that. For a time he strove to earn money with his pen in his own country. But the land was still trembling from the convulsion of a great war, and there were many before him, and he was little known. After a year had passed, he saw that he could not then suc-

ceed, and very heavy at heart he set his face eastward again, to toil at his old calling as a correspondent for a great London paper, to earn bread for himself and for the one living being that he loved.

Part III.

DONNA FRANCESCA CAMPODONICO

CHAPTER XLI.

Not long after this Dalrymple returned to Rome, after an absence of several years. Family affairs had kept him in England and Scotland during his daughter's married life with Reanda; and after she had left the latter, it was natural that he should not wish to be in the same city with her, considering the view he took of her actions. Then, after he had learned from Griggs's brief note that she was dead, he felt that he could not return at once, hard and unforgiving as he was. But at last the power that attracted him was too strong to be resisted any longer, and he yielded to it and came back.

He took up his abode in a hotel in the Piazza di Spagna, not far from his old lodgings. Long as he had lived in Rome, he was a foreigner there and liked the foreigners' quarter of the city. He intended once more to get a lodging and a servant, and to live in his morose solitude as of old, but on his first arrival he naturally went to the hotel. He did not know whether Griggs were in Rome. Reanda was alive, and living at the Palazzetto Borgia; for the two had exchanged letters twice a

year, written in the constrained tone of mutual civility which suited the circumstances in which they were placed towards each other.

In Dalrymple's opinion, Reanda had been to blame to a certain extent, in having maintained his intimacy with Francesca when he was aware that it displeased his wife. At the same time, the burden of the fault was undoubtedly the woman's, and her father felt in a measure responsible for it. Whether he felt much more than that it would be hard to say. His gloomy nature had spent itself in secret sorrow for his wife, with a faithfulness of grief which might well atone for many shortcomings. It is certain that he was not in any way outwardly affected by the news of Gloria's death. He had never loved her, she had disgraced him, and now she was dead. There was nothing more to be said about it.

He was not altogether indifferent to the inheritance of title and fortune which had fallen to him in his advanced middle age. But if either influenced his character, the result was rather an increased tendency to live his own life in scorn and defiance of society, for it made him conscious that he should find even less opposition to his eccentricities than in former days, when he had been relatively a poor man without any especial claim to consideration.

Two or three days after he had arrived in Rome,

he went to the Palazzetto Borgia and sent in his card, asking to see Francesca Campodonico. In order that she might know who he was, he wrote his name in pencil, as she would probably not have recognized him as Lord Redin. In this he was mistaken, for Reanda, who had heard the news, had told her of it. She received him in the drawing-room. She looked very ill, he thought, and was much thinner than in former times, but her manner was not changed. They talked upon indifferent subjects, and there was a constraint between them. Dalrymple broke through it roughly at last.

"Did you ever see my daughter after she left her husband?" he asked, as though he were inquiring about a mere acquaintance.

Francesca started a little.

"No," she answered. "It would not have been easy."

She remembered her interview with Griggs, but resolved not to speak of it. She would have changed the subject abruptly if he had given her time.

"It certainly was not to be expected that you should," said Lord Redin, thoughtfully. "When a woman chooses to break with society, she knows perfectly well what she is doing, and one may as well leave her to herself."

Francesca was shocked by the cynicism of the speech. The colour rose faintly in her cheeks.

"She was your daughter," she said, reproachfully. "Since she is dead, you should speak less cruelly of her."

"I did not speak cruelly. I merely stated a fact. She disgraced herself and me, and her husband. The circumstance that she is dead does not change the case, so far as I can see."

"Do you know how she died?" asked Francesca, moved to righteous anger, and willing to pain him if she could.

He looked up suddenly, and bent his shaggy brows.

"No," he answered. "That man Griggs wrote me that she had died suddenly. That was all I heard."

"She did not die a natural death."

"Indeed?"

"She poisoned herself. She could not bear the life. It was very dreadful." Francesca's voice sank to a low tone.

Lord Redin was silent for a few moments, and his bony face had a grim look. Perhaps something in the dead woman's last act appealed to him, as nothing in her life had done.

"Tell me, please. I should like to know. After all, she was my daughter."

"Yes," said Francesca, gravely. "She was your daughter. She was very unhappy with Paul Griggs, and she found out very soon that she had

made a dreadful mistake. She loved her husband, after all."

"Like a woman!" interjected Lord Redin, half unconsciously.

Francesca paid no attention to the remark, except, perhaps, that she raised her eyebrows a little.

"They went out to spend the summer at Subiaco —"

"At Subiaco?" Dalrymple's steely blue eyes fixed themselves in a look of extreme attention.

"Yes, during the heat. They lodged in the house of a man called Stefanone — a wine-seller — a very respectable place."

Lord Redin had started nervously at the name, but he recovered himself.

"Very respectable," he said, in an odd tone.

"You know the house?" asked Francesca, in surprise.

"Very well indeed. I was there nearly five and twenty years ago. I supposed that Stefanone was dead by this time."

"No. He and his wife are alive, and take lodgers."

"Excuse me, but how do you know all this?" asked Lord Redin, with sudden curiosity.

"I have been there," answered Francesca. "I have often been to the convent. You know that one of our family is generally abbess. A Cardinal

Braccio was archbishop, too, a good many years ago. Casa Braccio owns a good deal of property there."

"Yes. I know that you are of the family."

"My name was Francesca Braccio," said Francesca, quietly. "Of course I have always known Subiaco, and every one there knows Stefanone, and the story of his daughter who ran away with an Englishman many years ago, and never was heard of again."

Lord Redin grew a trifle paler.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Does every one know that story?"

There was something so constrained in his tone that Francesca looked at him curiously.

"Yes — in Subiaco," she answered. "But Gloria —" she lingered a little sadly on the name — "Gloria wrote letters to her husband from there and begged him to go and see her."

"He could hardly be expected to do that," said Lord Redin, his hard tone returning. "Did you advise him to go?"

"He consulted me," answered Francesca, rather coldly. "I told him to follow his own impulse. He did not go. He did not believe that she was sincere."

"I do not blame him. When a woman has done that sort of thing, there is no reason for believing her."

"He should have gone. I should have influenced him, I think, and I did wrong. She wrote him one more letter and then killed herself. She suffered horribly and only died two days afterwards. Shall I tell you more?"

"If there is more to tell," said Lord Redin, less hardly.

"There is not much. I went out there last year. They had refused her Christian burial. Paul Griggs bought a piece of land amongst the rock, on the other side of the torrent, and buried her there. It is surrounded by a wall, and there is a plain slab without a name. There are flowers. He pays Stefanone to have it cared for. They told me all they knew — it is too terrible. She died singing — she was out of her mind. It must have been dreadful. Old Nanna, Stefanone's wife, was in the room, and fainted with terror. It seems that poor Gloria, oddly enough, had an extraordinary resemblance to that unfortunate nun of our family who was burned to death in the convent, and whom Nanna had often seen. She sang like her, too — at the last minute Nanna thought she saw poor sister Maria Addolorata standing up dead and singing. It was rather strange."

Lord Redin said nothing. He had bowed his head so that Francesca could not see his face, but she saw that his hands were trembling violently. She thought that she had misjudged the man, and

that he was really very deeply moved by the story of his daughter's death. Doubtless, his emotion had made him wish to control himself, and he had overshot the mark and spoken cruelly only in order to seem calm. No one had ever spoken to him of his wife, and even now he could hardly bear to hear her name. It was long before he looked up. Then he rose almost immediately.

"Will you allow me to come and see you occasionally?" he asked, with a gentleness not at all like his usual manner.

Francesca was touched at last, misunderstanding the cause of the change. She told him to come as often as he pleased. As he was going, he remembered that he had not asked after his son-in-law. Reanda had always seemed to belong to Francesca, and it was natural enough that he should inquire of her.

"Where is Reanda to be found?" he asked.

"He is very ill," said Francesca, in a low voice. "I am afraid you cannot see him."

"Where does he live? I will at least inquire. I am sorry to hear that he is ill."

"He lives here," she answered with a little hesitation. "He is in his old rooms upstairs."

"Oh! Yes — thank you." Their eyes met for a moment. Lord Redin's glittered, but Francesca's were clear and true. "I am sure you take good care of him," he added. "Good-bye."

He left her alone, and when he was gone, she sat down wearily and laid her head back against a cushion, with half-closed eyes. Her lips were almost colourless, and her mouth had grown ten years older.

Reanda was dying, and she knew it, and with him the light was going out of her life, as it had gone out long ago from Dalrymple's, as it had gone out of the life of Paul Griggs. The idea crossed her mind that these two men, with herself, were linked and bound together by some strange fatality which she could not understand, but from which there was no escape, and which was bringing them slowly and surely to the blank horror of lonely old age.

The same thought occurred to Lord Redin as he slowly threaded the streets, going back to his hotel, to his lonely dinner, his lonely evening, his lonely, sleepless night. He alone of the three now knew all that there was to know, and in the chronicle of his far memories all led back to that day at Subiaco, long ago, when he had first knocked at the convent gate — beyond that, to the evening when poor Annetta had told him of the beautiful nun with the angel's voice. Many lives had been wrecked since that first day, and every one of them owed its ruin to him. He felt strangely drawn to Francesca Campodonico. There was something in her face that very faintly reminded him of his dead

wife, her kinswoman, and of his dead daughter, another of her race. His gloomy northern nature felt the fatality of it all. He never could repent of what he had done. The golden light of his one short happiness shone through the shrouding veil of fatal time. In his own eyes, with his beliefs, he had not even sinned in taking what he had loved so well. But all the sorrow he saw, came from that deed. Francesca Campodonico's eyes were as clear and true as her heart. But he knew that Reanda's life was everything on earth to her, and he guessed that she was to lose that, too, before long. He would willingly have parted with his own, but through all his being there was a rough, manly courage that forbade the last act of fear, and there was a stern old Scottish belief that it was wrong — plainly wrong.

He did not wish to see Paul Griggs any more than he had wished to see his daughter after she had left her husband. But no thought of vengeance crossed his mind. It seemed to him fruitless to think of avenging himself upon fate; for, after all, it was fate that had done the dire mischief. Possibly, he thought, as he walked slowly towards his hotel, fate had brought him back to Rome now, to deal with him as she had dealt with his. He should be glad of it, for he found little in life that was not gloomy and lonely beyond any words. He did not know why he had come. He

had acted upon an impulse in going to see Francesca that day.

When he reached the Corso, instead of going to his hotel he walked down the street in the direction of the Piazza del Popolo. He wished to see the house in which Gloria had lived with Griggs, and he remembered the street and the number from her having written to him when she wanted money. He reached the corner of the Via della Frezza, and turned down, looking up at the numbers as he went along. He glanced at the little wine shop on the left, with its bush, its red glass lantern, and its rush-bottomed stools set out by the door. In the shadow within he saw the gleam of silver buttons on a dark blue jacket. There was nothing uncommon in the sight.

He found the house, paused, looked up at the windows, and looked twice at the number.

"Do you seek some one?" inquired the one-eyed cobbler, resting his black hands on his knees.

"Did Mr. Paul Griggs ever live here?" asked Lord Redin.

"Many years," answered the cobbler, laconically.

"Where does he live now?"

"Always here, except when he is not here. Third floor, on the left. You can ring the bell. Who knows? Perhaps he will open. I do not wish to tell lies."

The old man grunted, bent down over the shoe,

and ran his awl through the sole. He was profoundly attached to Paul Griggs, who had always been kind to him, and since Gloria's death he defended him from visitors with more determination than ever.

Lord Redin stood still and said nothing. In ten seconds the cobbler looked up with a surly frown.

"If you wish to go up, go up," he growled. "If not, favour me by getting out of my light."

The Scotchman looked at him.

"You do not remember me," he observed. "I used to come here with the Signore."

"Well? I have told you. If you want him, there is the staircase."

"No. I do not want him," said Lord Redin, and he turned away abruptly.

"As you please," growled the cobbler without looking up again.

CHAPTER XLII.

Paul Griggs had gone back to the house in the Via della Frezza after his return from America, and lived alone in the little apartment in which the happy days of his life had been spent. He was a man able to live two lives, — the one in the past, the other in the active present. It was his instinct to be alone in his sorrow, and alone in the struggle which lay before him, for himself and his child. But he would have with him all that could make the memory of Gloria real. The reality of such things softened with their contrast the hardness of life.

He had taken the same rooms again. Out of boxes and trunks stored in a garret of the house, he had taken many things which had belonged to Gloria. Alone, he had arranged the rooms as they used to be. His writing-table stood in the same place, and near it was Gloria's chair; beside it, the little stand with her needlework, her silks, her scissors, and her thimble, all as it used to be. A novel she had once read when sitting there lay upon the chair. Many little objects which had belonged to her were all in their accustomed places. On

the mantelpiece the cheap American clock ticked loudly as in old days.

Day after day, as of old, he sat in his place at work. He had made the room so alive with her that sometimes, looking up from a long spell of writing, he forgot, and stared an instant at the bedroom door, and listened for her footstep. Those were his happiest moments, though each was killed in turn by the vision of a lonely grave among rocks.

With intensest longing he called her back to him. In his sleep, the last words he had spoken to her were spoken again by his unconscious lips in the still, dark night. Everything in him called her, his living soul and his strong bodily self. There were times when he knew that if he opened his eyes, shut to see her, he should see her really, there in her chair. He looked, trembling, and there was nothing. In dreams he sought her and could not find her, though he wandered in dark places, across endless wastes of broken clods of earth and broken stone. It was as though her grave covered the whole world round, and his path lay on the shadowed arms of an infinite great cross. And again the grey dawn awoke him from the search, to feel that, for pity's sake, she must be alive and near him. But he was always alone.

Silent, iron-browed, iron-handed, he faced the world alone, doing all that was required of him, and more also. As he had said to Gloria in that

very room, he was building up a superiority for himself, since genius was not his. He had in the rough ore of his strength the metal which some few men receive as a birth-gift from nature, ready smelted and refined, ready for them to coin at a single stroke, and throw broadcast to the applauding world. He had not much, perhaps, but he had something of the true ore, and in the furnace of his untiring energy he would burn out the dross and find the precious gold at last. It could not be for her, now. It was not for himself, but it was to be for the little child, growing up in a far country with a clean name — to be his father's friend, and nothing more, but to be happy, for the dead woman's sake who bore him.

As in all that made a part of Paul Griggs, there was in his memory of Gloria and in his sorrow for her that element of endurance which was the foundation of his nature. That portion of his life was finished, and there could never be anything like it again; but it was to be always present with him, so long as he lived. He was sure of that. It would always be in his power to close his eyes and believe that she was near him. If it were possible, he loved her more dead than he had loved her living.

And she had loved him to the last, and had given her life in the mad thought of lightening his burden. Her last words to him had told him so.

Her last wish had been to see the child. And the greatest sacrifice he could now make to her was to separate himself from the child, and let him grow up to look upon the man who provided for him as his friend, but as nothing more. It was an exaggerated idea, perhaps, though it was by far the wisest course. Yet in doing what he did, Griggs deprived himself for months at a time of something that was of her, and he did it for her sake. He knew that in her heart there had been the unspoken shame of her ruined life. Shame should never come near little Walter Crowdie. The secret could be kept, and Paul Griggs meant to keep it, as he kept many things from the world.

All his lonely life grew in the perfect memory, cut short though it was by fate's cruel scythe-stroke. Even that one fearful day held no shadow of unfaithfulness. She had been mad, but she had loved him. She had done a deed of horror upon herself, but she had loved him, and madly had done it for his sake. She had laid down her life for him. All that he could do would be nothing compared with that. All that he could tear from the world and lay tenderly as an offering at her feet would be but a handful of dust in comparison with what she had done in the madness of love.

His heart strings wound themselves about their treasure, closer and closer, stronger and stronger. The two natures that strove together in him, the

natures of body and soul, were at one with her, and drew life from her though she was gone. It seemed impossible that they could ever again part and smite one another for the mastery, as of old, for one sorrow had overwhelmed them both, and together they knew the depths of one grief.

Again, as of old, he defied fate. Death could take the child from him, but could not separate the three in death or life. So long as the child lived, to do or die for him was the question, while life should last. But Paul Griggs defied fate, for fate's grim hand could not uproot his heart from the strong place of his great dead love, to buffet it and tear it again. He was alone, bodily, but he was safe forever.

Out of the dimness of twilight shadows the pale face came to him, and the sweet lips kissed his; in a light not earthly the dark eyes lightened, and the red auburn hair gleamed and fell about him. In the darkness, a tender hand stole softly upon his, and words yet more tender stirred the stillness. He knew that she was near him, close to him, with him. The truth of what had been made the half dream all true. Only in his sleep he could not find her, and was wandering ever over a dreary grave that covered the whole world.

So his life went on with little change, inwardly or outwardly, from day to day, in the absolute security from danger which the dead give us of

themselves. The faith that had gone beyond her death could go beyond his own life, too. He defied fate.

Then fate, silent, relentless, awful, knocked at his door.

He was at work as usual. It was a bright winter's day, and the high sun of the late morning streamed across one corner of his writing-table. He was thinking of nothing but his writing, and upon that his thoughts were closely intent in that everlasting struggle to do better which had nearly driven poor Gloria mad.

The little jingling bell rang and thumped against the outer door to which it was fastened. He paid no attention to it, till it rang again, an instant later. Then he looked up and waited, listening. Again, again, and again he heard it, at equal intervals, five times in all. That was the old cobbler's signal, and the only one to which Griggs ever responded. He laid down his pen and went to the door. The one-eyed man, his shoemaker's apron twisted round his waist, stood on the landing, and gave him a small, thick package, tied with a black string, under which was thrust a note. Griggs took it without a word, and the bandy-legged old cobbler swung away from the door with a satisfied grunt.

Griggs took the parcel back to his work-room, and stood by the window looking at the address on

the note. He recognized Francesca Campodonico's handwriting, though he had rarely seen it, and he broke the seal with considerable curiosity, for he could not imagine why Donna Francesca should write to him. He even wondered at her knowing that he was in Rome. He had never spoken with her since that day long ago, when she had sent for him and begged him to take Gloria back to her father. He read the note slowly. It was in Italian, and the language was rather formal.

"SIGNORE: — My old and dear friend, Signor Angelo Reanda, died the day before yesterday after a long illness. During the last hours of his life he asked me to do him a service, and I gave him the solemn promise which I fulfil in sending you the accompanying package. You will see that it was sealed by him and addressed to you by himself, probably before he was taken ill, and he saw it before he died and said that it was the one he meant me to send. That was all he told me regarding it, and I am wholly ignorant of the contents. I have ascertained that you are in Rome, and are living, as formerly, in the Via della Frezza, and to that address I send the parcel. Pray inform me that you have received it.

"Believe me, Signore, with perfect esteem,

"FRANCESCA CAMPODONICO."

Griggs read the note twice through to the end,

and laid it upon the table. Then he thrust his hands into his pockets, and turned thoughtfully to the window without touching the parcel, of which he had not even untied the black string.

So Reanda was dead at last. It was nothing to him, now, though it might have meant much if the man had died two years earlier. Living people were very little to Paul Griggs. They might as well be dead, he thought. Nevertheless, the bald fact that Reanda was gone, made him thoughtful. Another figure had disappeared out of his life, though it had not meant very much. He believed, and had always believed, that Reanda had loved Francesca in secret, though she had treated him as a mere friend, as a protectress should treat one who needs her protection.

Griggs turned and took up the note to look at it keenly, for he believed himself a judge of handwriting, and he thought that he might detect in hers the indications of any great suffering. The lines ran down a little at the end, but otherwise the large, careful hand was the same as ever, learned in a convent and little changed since, even as the woman herself had changed little. She was the same always, simple, honest, strangely maidenlike, thoroughly good.

He turned to the window again. So Reanda was dead. He would not find Gloria, to whatsoever place he was gone. The shadow of a smile

wreathed itself about the mouth of the lonely man — the last that was there for a long time after that day. Gloria was dead, but Gloria was his, and he hers, for ever and ever. Neither heaven nor hell could tear up his heart nor loosen the strong hold of all of him that clung to her and had grown about her and through her, till he and she were quite one.

Then, all at once, he wondered what it could be that Reanda had wished to send him from beyond the grave. He turned, took the parcel, and snapped the black string with his fingers, and took off the paper. Within was the parcel, wrapped in a second paper and firmly tied with broad tape. A few words were written on the outside.

"To be given to Paul Griggs when I am dead. A. R."

The superscription told nothing, but he looked at it curiously as one does at such things, when the sender is beyond answer. He cut the white tape, for it was tied so tightly that he could not slip a finger under it to break it. There was something of hard determination in the way it was tied.

It contained letters in their envelopes, as they had reached Reanda through the post, all of the same size, laid neatly one upon the other — a score or more of them.

Griggs felt his hand shake, for he recognized Gloria's writing. His first impulse was to burn

the whole package, as it was, reverently, as something which had belonged to Gloria, in which he had no part, or share, or right. He laid his hand upon the pile of letters, and looked at the small fire to see whether it were burning well. Under his hand he felt something hard inside the uppermost envelope. His fate was upon him — the fate he had so often defied to do its worst, since all that he had was dead and was his forever.

Without another thought, he took from the envelope the letter it contained, and the hard thing which was inside the letter. He held it a moment in his hand, and it flamed in the beam of sunlight that fell across the end of the table, and dazzled him. Then he realized what it was. It was Gloria's wedding ring, and twisted round and round it and in and out of it was a lock of her red auburn hair, serpent-like, flaming in the sunshine, with a hundred little tongues that waved and moved softly under his breath.

An icy chill smote him in the neck, and his strong limbs shook to his feet as he laid the thing down upon the corner of the table. There was a fearful fascination in it. The red gold hairs stirred and moved in the sunlight still, even when he no longer breathed upon them. It was her hair, and it seemed alive.

In his other hand he still held the letter. Fate had him now, and would not let him go while he

could feel. Again and again the cruel chill smote him in the back. He opened the doubled sheet, and saw the date and the name of the place, — Subiaco, — and the first words — 'Heart of my heart, this is my last cry to you' — and it was to Angelo Reanda.

Rigid and feeling as though great icy hands were drawing him up by the neck from the ground, he stood still and read every word, with all the message of loathing and abject fear and horror of his touch, which every word brought him, from the dead, through the other dead.

Slowly, regularly, without wavering, moved by a power not his own, his hands took the other letters and opened them, and his eyes read all the words, from the last to the first. One by one the sheets fell upon the table, and all alone in the midst the lock of red auburn hair sent up its little lambent flame in the sunshine.

Paul Griggs stood upright, stark with the stress of rending soul and breaking heart.

As he stood there, he was aware of a man in black beside him, like himself, ghastly to see, with shadows and fires for eyes, and thin, parted lips that showed wolfish teeth, strong, stern, with iron hands.

"You are dead," said his own voice out of the other's mouth. "You are dead, and I am Gorlias."

Then the strong teeth were set and the lips closed, and the gladiator's unmatched arms wound themselves upon the other's strength, with grip and clutch and strain not of earthly men.

Silent and terrible, they wrestled in fight, arm to arm, bone to bone, breath to breath. Hour after hour they strove in the still room. The sun went westering away, the shadows deepened. The night came stealing black and lonely through the window. Foot to foot, breast to breast, in the dark, they bowed themselves one upon the other, dumb in the agony of their reeling strife.

Late in the night, in the cold room, Paul Griggs felt the carpet under his hands as he lay upon his back.

His heart was broken.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Lord Redin had barely glanced at the man in the blue jacket with silver buttons, whom he had seen in the deep shadow of the little wine shop as he strolled down the Via della Frezza. But Stefanone had seen him and had gone to the door as he passed, watching him when he stood talking to the one-eyed cobbler, and keeping his keen eyes on him as he passed again on his homeward way. And all the way to the hotel in the Piazza di Spagna Stefanone had followed him at a distance, watching the great loose-jointed frame and the slightly stooping head, till the Scotchman disappeared under the archway, past the porter, who stood aside, his gold-laced cap in his hand, bowing low to the 'English lord.'

Stefanone waited a few moments and then accosted the porter civilly.

"Do you know if the proprietor wishes to buy some good wine of last year, at a cheap rate?" he asked. "You understand. I am of the country. I cannot go in and look for the proprietor. But you are doubtless the director and you manage these things for him. That is why I ask you."

The porter smiled at the flattery, but said that he believed wine had been bought for the whole year.

"The hotel is doubtless full of rich foreigners," observed Stefanone. "It is indeed beautiful. I should prefer it to the Palazzo Borghese. Is it not full?"

"Quite full," answered the porter, proud of the establishment.

"For instance," said Stefanone, "I saw a great signore going in, just before I took the liberty of speaking with you. I am sure that he is a great English signore. Not perhaps a mylord. But a great signore, having much money."

"What makes you think that?" inquired the porter, with a superior smile.

"Eh, the reasons are two. First, you bowed to him, as though he were some personage, and you of course know who he is. Secondly, he lifted his hat to you. He is therefore a real signore, as good perhaps as a Roman prince. We say a proverb in the country — 'to salute is courtesy, to answer is duty.' Therefore when any one salutes a real signore, he answers and lifts his hat. These are the reasons why I say this one must be a great one."

"For that matter, you are right," laughed the porter. "That signore is an English lord. What a combination! You have guessed it. His name is Lord Redin."

Stefanone's sharp eyes fixed themselves vacantly, for he did not wish to betray his surprise at not hearing the name he had expected.

"Eh!" he exclaimed. "Names? What are they, when one is a prince. Prince of this. Duke of that. Our Romans are full of names. I daresay this signore has four or five."

But the porter knew of no other, and presently Stefanone departed, wondering whether he had made a mistake, after all, and recalling the features of the man he had followed to compare them with those younger ones he remembered so distinctly. He went back to the Via della Frezza and drank a glass of wine. Then he filled the glass again and carried it carefully across the street to his friend the cobbler.

"Drink," he said. "It will do you good. A drop of wine at sunset gives force to the stomach."

The one-eyed man looked up, and smiled at his friend, a phenomenon rarely observed on his wrinkled and bearded face. He shrugged one round shoulder, by way of assent, held his head a little on one side and stretched out his black hand with the glass in it, to the light. He tasted it, smelt it, and looked up at Stefanone before he drank in earnest.

"Black soul!" he exclaimed by way of an approving asseveration. "This is indeed wine!"

"He took it for vinegar!" observed Stefanone, speaking to the air.

"It is wine," answered the cobbler when he had drained the glass. "It is a consolation."

Then they began to talk together, and Stefanone questioned him about his interview with the tall gentleman an hour earlier. The cobbler really knew nothing about him, though he remembered having seen him several times, years ago, before Gloria had come.

"You know nothing," said Stefanone. "That signore is the father of Sor Paolo's signora, who died in my house."

"You are joking," returned the cobbler, gravely. "He would have come to see his daughter while she lived — requiescat!"

"And I say that I am not joking. Do you wish to hear the truth? Well. You have much confidence with Sor Paolo. Tell him that the father of the poor Signora Gloria came to the door and asked questions. You shall hear what he will say. He will say that it is possible. Then he will ask you about him. You will tell him, so and so — a very tall signore, all made of pieces that swing loosely when he walks, with a beard like the Moses of the fountain, and hard blue eyes that strike you like two balls from a gun, and hair that is neither red nor white, and a bony face like an old horse."

"It is true," said the cobbler, reflectively. "It is he. It is his picture."

"You will also say that he is now an English lord, but that formerly they called him Sor Angoscia. You, who are friends with Sor Paolo, you should tell him this. It may be that Sor Angoscia wishes him evil. Who knows? In this world the combinations are so many!"

It was long before the cobbler got an opportunity of speaking with Griggs, and when he had the chance, he forgot all about it, though Stefanone reminded him of it from time to time. But when he at last spoke of the matter he was surprised to find that Stefanone had been quite right, as Griggs admitted without the least hesitation. He told Stefanone so, and the peasant was satisfied, though he had long been positive that he had found his man at last, and recognized him in spite of his beard and his age.

After that Stefanone haunted the Piazza di Spagna in the morning, talking a little with the models who used to stand there in their mountain costumes to be hired by painters in the days when pictures of them were the fashion. Many of them came from the neighbourhood of Subiaco, and knew Stefanone by sight. When Lord Redin came out of the hotel, as he generally did between eleven and twelve if the day were fine, Stefanone put his pipe out, stuck it into his breeches' pocket with his brass-handled clasp-knife, and strolled away a hundred yards behind his enemy.

If Lord Redin noticed him once or twice, it was merely to observe that men still came to Rome wearing the old-fashioned dress of the respectable peasants. Being naturally fearless, and at present wholly unsuspicious, it never struck him that any one could be dogging his footsteps whenever he went out of his hotel. In the evening he went out very little and then generally in a carriage. Two or three times, on a Sunday, he walked over to Saint Peter's and listened to the music at Vespers, as many foreigners used to do. Stefanone followed him into the church and watched him from a distance. Once the peasant saw Donna Francesca, whom he knew by sight as a member of the Braccio family, sitting within the great gate of the Chapel of the Choir, where the service was held. Lord Redin always followed the frequented streets, which led in an almost direct line from the Piazza di Spagna by the Via Condotti to the bridge of Saint Angelo. It was the nearest way. He never went back to the Via della Frezza, for he had no desire to see Paul Griggs, and his curiosity had been satisfied by once looking at the house in which his daughter had lived. He spent his evenings alone in his rooms with a bottle of wine and a book. Luxury had become a habit with him, and he now preferred a draught of Château Lafitte to the rough Roman wine barely a year old, while three or four glasses of a certain brandy, twenty years in bottle,

which he had discovered in the hotel, were a necessary condition of his comfort. He had the intention of going out one evening, in cloak and soft hat, as of old, to dine in his old corner at the Falcone, but he put it off from day to day, feeling no taste for the coarser fare and the rougher drink when the hour came.

He often went to see Francesca Campodonico in the middle of the day, at which hour the Roman ladies used to be visible to their more intimate friends. An odd sort of sympathy had grown up between the two, though they scarcely ever alluded to past events, and then only by an accident which both regretted. Francesca exercised a refining influence upon the gloomy Scotchman, and as he knew her better, he even took the trouble to be less rough and cynical when he was with her. In character she was utterly different from his dead wife, but there was something of family resemblance between the two which called up memories very dear to him.

Her influence softened him. In his wandering life he had more than once formed acquaintances with men of tastes more or less similar to his own, which might have ripened into friendships for a man of less morose character. But in that, he and Paul Griggs were very much alike. They found an element in every acquaintance which roused their distrust, and as men to men they were both

equally incapable of making a confidence. Dalrymple's life had not brought him into close relations with any woman except his wife. For her sake he had kept all others at a distance in a strange jealousy of his own heart which had made her for him the only woman in the world. Then, too, he had hated, for her, the curiosity of those who had evidently wished to know her story. That had been always a secret. He had told it to his father, and his father had died with it. No one else had ever known whence Maria had come, nor what her name had been. If Captain Crowdie had ever guessed the truth, which was doubtful, he had held his tongue.

But Angus Dalrymple was no longer the man he had been in those days. He had changed very much in the past two or three years; for though he had almost outlived the excesses into which he had fallen in his first sorrow, his hardy constitution had been shaken, if not weakened, by them. Physically his nerves were almost as good as ever, but morally he was not the same man. He felt the need of sympathy and confidence, which with such natures is the first sign of breaking down, and of the degeneration of pride.

That was probably the secret of what he felt when he was with Francesca. She had that rarest quality in women, too, which commands men without inspiring love. It is very hard to explain

what that quality is, but most men who have lived much and seen much have met with it at least once in their lives.

There is a sort of manifested goodness for which the average man of the world has a profound and unreasonable contempt. And there is another sort which most wholly commands the respect of that man who has lived hardest. From a religious point of view, both may be equally real and conducive to salvation. The cynic, the worn out man of the world, the man whose heart is broken, all look upon the one as a weakness and the other as a strength. Perhaps there is more humanity in the one than in the other. A hundred women may rebuke a man for something he has done, and he will smile at the reproach, though he may smile sadly. The one will say to him the same words, and he will be gravely silent and will feel that she is right and will like her the better for it ever afterwards. And she is not, as a rule, the woman whom such men would love.

"I have never before met a woman whom I should wish to have for my friend," said Lord Redin, one day when he was alone with Francesca. "I daresay I am not at all the kind of man you would select for purposes of friendship," he added, with a short laugh.

Francesca smiled a little at the frankness of the words, and shook her head.

"Perhaps not," she said. "Who knows? Life brings strange changes when one thinks that one knows it best."

"It has brought strange things to me," answered Lord Redin.

Then he was silent for a time. He felt the strong desire to speak out, for no good reason or purpose, and to tell her the story of his life. She would be horrorstruck at first. He fancied he could see the expression which would come to her face. But he held his peace, for she had not met him half-way, and he was ashamed of the weakness that was upon him.

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, after a little pause. "You must have had a strange life, and a very unhappy one. You speak of friendship as men speak who are in earnest, because there is no other hope for them. I know something of that."

She ceased, and her clear eyes turned sadly away from him.

"I know you do," he answered softly.

She looked at him again, and she liked him better than ever before, and pitied him sincerely. She had discovered that with all his faults he was not a bad man, as men go, for she did not know of that one deed of his youth which to her would have seemed a monstrous crime of sacrilege, beyond all forgiveness on earth or in heaven.

Then she began to speak of other things, for her

own words, and his, had gone too near her heart, and presently he left her and strolled homeward through the sunny streets. He walked slowly and thoughtfully, unconscious of the man in a blue jacket with silver buttons, who followed him and watched him with keen, unwinking eyes set under heavy brows.

But Stefanone was growing impatient, and his knife was every day a little sharper as he whetted it thoughtfully upon a bit of smooth oil-stone which he carried in his pocket. Would the Englishman ever turn down into some quiet street or lane where no one would be looking? And Stefanone's square face grew thinner and his aquiline features more and more eagle-like, till the one-eyed cobbler noticed the change, and spoke of it.

"You are consuming yourself for some female," he said. "You have white hair. This is a shameful thing."

But Stefanone laughed, instead of resenting the speech — a curiously nervous laugh.

"What would you have?" he replied. "We are men, and the devil is everywhere."

As he sat on the doorstep by the cobbler's bench, which was pushed far forward to get the afternoon light, he took up the short sharp shoemaker's knife, looked at it, held it in his hands and pared his coarse nails with it, whistling a little tune.

"That is a good knife," he observed carelessly.

The cobbler looked up and saw what he was doing.

"Black soul!" he cried out angrily. "That is my welt-knife, like a razor, and he pares his hoofs with it!"

But Stefanone dropped it into the little box of tools on the front of the bench, and whistled softly.

"You seem to me a silly boy!" said the cobbler, still wrathful.

"Apoplexy, how you talk!" answered Stefanone. "But I seem so to myself, sometimes."

CHAPTER XLIV.

The life of Paul Griggs was not less lonely than it had been before the day on which he had received and read Gloria's letters to Reanda, but it was changed. Everything which had belonged to the dead woman was gone from the room in which he sat and worked as usual. Even the position of the furniture was changed. But he worked on as steadily as before.

Outwardly he was very much the same man as ever. Any one who knew him well — if such a person had existed — would have seen that there was a little difference in the expression of his impassive face. The jaw was, if possible, more firmly set than ever, but there was a line in the forehead which had not been there formerly, and which softened the iron front, as it were, with something more human. It had come suddenly, and had remained. That was all.

But within, the difference was great and deep. He felt that the man who sat all day long at the writing-table doing his work was not himself any longer, but another being, his double and shadow, and in all respects his slave, except in one.

That other man sometimes paused in his work, fingering the pen unconsciously, as men do who hold it all day long, and thinking of Gloria with an expression of horror and suffering in his eyes. But he, the real Paul Griggs, never thought of her. The link was broken, the thread that had carried the message of dead love between him and the lonely grave beyond Subiaco was definitely broken. Stefanone came to receive the small sum which Griggs paid him monthly for his care of the place, and Griggs paid him as he would have paid his tailor, mechanically, and made a note of the payment in his pocket-book. When the man was gone, Griggs felt that his double was staring at the wall as a man stares at the dark surface of the pool in which the thing he loves has sunk for the last time.

It was always the other self that felt at such moments. He could abstract himself from it, and feel that he was watching it; he could direct it and make it do what he pleased; but he could neither control its thoughts nor feel any sympathy for them. Until the fatal day, the world had all been black to him; only by closing his eyes could he bring into it the light that hovered about a dead woman's face.

But now the black was changed to a flat and toneless white in which there was never the least variation. Life was to him a vast blank, in which,

without interest or sensation, he moved in any direction he pleased, and he pleased that it should be always the same direction, from the remembrance of a previous intention and abiding principle. But it might as well have been any other, backwards, or to right or left. It was all precisely the same, and it was perfectly inconceivable to him that he should ever care whether in the endless journey he ever came upon a spot or point in the blank waste which should prove to him that he had moved at all. Nothing could make any difference. He was beyond that state in which any difference was apprehensible between one thing and another.

His double had material wants, and was ruled by material circumstances. His double was a broken-hearted creature, toiling to make money for a little child to which it felt itself bound by every responsibility which can bind father to son; acknowledging the indebtedness in every act of its laborious life, denying itself every luxury, and almost every comfort, that there might be a little more for the child, now and in time to come; weary beyond earthly weariness, but untiring in the mechanical performance of its set task; fatally strong and destined, perhaps, to live on through sixty or seventy years of the same unceasing toil; fatally weak in its one deep wound, and horribly sensitive within itself, but outwardly expression-

less, strong, merely a little more pale and haggard than Paul Griggs had been.

This was the being whom Paul Griggs employed, as it were, to work for him, which he thoroughly understood and could control in every part except in its thoughts, and they were its own. But he himself existed in another sphere, in which there were neither interests nor responsibilities, nor landmarks, nor touches of human feeling, neither memories for the dead nor hopes for the living; in which everything was the same, because there was nothing but a sort of universal impersonal consciousness, no more attached to himself than to the beings he saw about him, or to that particular being which was his former self, — in which he chose to reside, merely because he required a bodily evidence of some sort in order to be alive — and there was no particular reason why he should not be alive. He therefore did not cease to live, but a straw might have turned the balance to the side of death.

It was certainly true that, so far as it could be said that there was any link between him and humanity, it lay in the existence of the little boy beyond the water. But it would have been precisely the same if little Walter Crowdie had died. He did not wish to see the child, for he had no wishes at all. Life being what it was, it would be very much better if the child were to die at once.

Since it happened to be alive, he forced his double to work for it. It was no longer any particular child so far as he himself was concerned. It belonged to his double, which seemed to be attached to it in an unaccountable way and did not complain at being driven to labour for it.

At certain moments, when he seemed to have got rid of his double altogether for a time, a question presented itself to his real self. The question was the great and old one — What was it for? And to what was it tending? Then the people he saw in the streets appeared to him to be very small, like ants, running hither and thither upon the ant-hill and about it, moved by something which they could not understand, but which made them do certain things with an appearance of logical sequence, just as he forced his double to work for little Walter Crowdie from morning till night. So the people ran about anxiously, or strolled lazily through the hours, careful or careless, as the case might be, but quite unconscious that they were of no consequence and of no use, and that it was quite immaterial whether they were alive or dead. Most of them thought that they cared a good deal for life on the whole, and that it held a multitude of pleasant and interesting things to be liked and sought, and an equal number of unpleasant and dangerous things to be avoided; all of which things had no real existence whatever, as the impersonal

consciousness of Paul Griggs was well aware. He watched the people curiously, as though they merely existed to perform tricks for his benefit. But they did not amuse him, for nothing could amuse him, nor interest him when he had momentarily got rid of his double, as sometimes happened when he was out of doors.

One day, the month having passed again, Stefanone came for his money. It was very little, and the old peasant would willingly have undertaken that the work should be done for nothing. But he was interested in Paul Griggs, and he was growing very impatient because he could not get an opportunity of falling upon Lord Redin in a quiet place. He had formed a new plan of almost childlike simplicity. When Griggs had paid him the money, he lingered a moment and looked about the room.

"Signore, you have changed the furniture," he observed. "That chair was formerly here. This table used to be there. There are a thousand changes."

"Yes," said Griggs, taking up his pen to go on with his work. "You have good eyes," he added good-naturedly.

"Two," assented Stefanone; "each better than the other. For instance, I will tell you. When that chair was by the window, there was a little table beside it. On the table was the work-basket

of your poor Signora, whom may the Lord preserve in glory! Is it truth?"

"Yes," answered Griggs, with perfect indifference. "It is quite true."

The allusion did not pain him, the man who was talking with Stefanone. It would perhaps hurt the other man when he thought of it later.

"Signore," said Stefanone, who evidently had something in his mind, "I was thinking in the night, and this thought came to me. The dead are dead. Requiescant! It is better for the living to live in holy peace. You never see the father of the Signora. There is bad blood between you. This was my thought — let them be reconciled, and spend an evening together. They will speak of the dead one. They will shed tears. They will embrace. Let the enmity be finished. In this way they will enjoy life more."

"You are crazy, Stefanone," answered Griggs, impatiently. "But how do you know who is the father of the Signora?"

"Every one knows it, Signore!" replied the peasant, with well-feigned sincerity. "Every one knows that it is the great English lord who lives at the hotel in the Piazza di Spagna this year. Signore, I have said a word. You must not take it ill. Enmity is bad. Friendship is a good thing. And then it is simple. With maccaroni one makes acquaintance again. There is the Falcone, but it

would be better here. We will cook the maccaroni in the kitchen; you will eat on this table. What are all these papers for? Study, study! A dish of good paste is better, with cheese. I will bring a certain wine — two flasks. Then you will be friends, for you will drink together. And if the English lord drinks too much, I will go home with him to the hotel in the Piazza di Spagna. But you will only have to go to bed. Once in a year, what is it to be a little gay with good wine? At least you will be good friends. Then things will end well."

Griggs looked at Stefanone curiously, while the old peasant was speaking, for he knew the people well, and he suspected something though he did not know what to think.

"Perhaps some day we may take your advice," he said coldly. "Good morning, Stefanone; I have much to write."

"I remove the inconvenience," answered Stefanone, in the stock Italian phrase for taking leave.

"No inconvenience," replied Griggs, civilly, as is the custom. "But I have to work."

"Study, study!" grumbled Stefanone, going towards the door. "What does it all conclude, this great study? Headache. For a flask of wine you have the same thing, and the pleasure besides. It is enough. Signore," he added, reluctantly turning the handle, "I go. Think of what I have

said to you. Sometimes an old man says a wise word."

He went away very much discontented with the result of the conversation. His mind was a medley of cunning and simplicity backed by an absolutely unforgiving temper and great caution. His plan had seemed exceedingly good. Lord Redin and Griggs would have supped together, and the former would very naturally have gone home alone. Stefanone was oddly surprised that Griggs should not have acceded to the proposition at once, though in reality there was not the slightest of small reasons for his doing so.

It was long since anything had happened to rouse Griggs into thinking about any individual human being as anything more than a bit of the world's furniture, to be worn out and thrown away in the course of time, out of sight. But something in the absolutely gratuitous nature of Stefanone's advice moved his suspicions. He saw, with his intimate knowledge of the Roman peasant's character, the whole process of the old wine-seller's mind, if only, in the first place, the fellow had the desire to harass Dalrymple. That being granted, the rest was plain enough. Dalrymple, if he really came to supper with Griggs, would stay late into the night and finish all the wine there might be. On his way home through the deserted streets, Stefanone could kill him at his leisure and convenience, and

nobody would be the wiser. The only difficulty lay in establishing some sufficient reason why Stefanone should wish to kill him at all, and in this Griggs signally failed, which was not surprising.

All at once, as generally happened now, he lost all interest in the matter and returned to his work; or rather, to speak as he might have spoken, he set his mechanical self to work for him, while his own being disappeared in blank indifference and unconsciousness. But on the following day, which chanced to be a Sunday, he went out in the morning for a walk. He rarely worked on Sundays, having long ago convinced himself that a day of rest was necessary in the long run.

As he was coming home, he saw Lord Redin walking far in front of him down the Corso, easily recognizable by his height and his loose, swinging gait. Griggs had not proceeded many steps further when Stefanone passed him, walking at a swinging stride. The peasant had probably seen him, but chose to take no notice of him. Griggs allowed him to get a fair start and then quickened his own pace, so as to keep him in view. Lord Redin swung along steadily and turned up the Via Condotti. Stefanone almost ran, till he, too, had turned the corner of the street. Griggs, without running, nearly overtook him as he took the same turn a moment later.

It was perfectly clear that Stefanone was dog-

ging the Scotchman's steps. The latter crossed the Piazza di Spagna, and entered the deep archway of his hotel. The peasant slackened his speed at once and lounged across the square towards the foot of the great stairway which leads up to the Trinità de' Monti. Griggs followed him, and came up with him just as he sat down upon a step beside one of the big stone posts, to take breath and light his pipe. The man looked up, touched his hat, smiled, and struck a sulphur match, which he applied to the tobacco in the red clay bowl before the sulphur was half burned out, after the manner of his kind.

"You have taken a walk, Signore," he observed, puffing away at the willow stem and watching the match.

"You walk fast, Stefanone," answered Griggs. "You can walk as fast as Lord Redin."

Stefanone did not show the least surprise. He pressed down the burning tobacco with one horny finger, and carefully laid the last glowing bit of the burnt-out wooden match upon it.

"For this, we are people of the mountains," he answered slowly. "We can walk."

"Why do you wish to kill that signore?" inquired Griggs, calmly.

Stefanone looked up, and the pale lids of his keen eyes were contracted as he stared hard and long at the other's face.

"What are you saying?" he asked, with a short, harsh laugh. "What is passing through your head? What have I to do with the Englishman? Nothing. These are follies!"

And still he gazed keenly at Griggs, awaiting the latter's reply. Griggs answered him contemptuously in the dialect.

"You take me for a foreigner! You might know better."

"I do not know what you mean," answered Stefanone, doggedly. "It is Sunday. I am at leisure. I walk to take a little air. It is my affair. Besides, at this hour, who would follow a man to kill him? It is about to ring midday. There are a thousand people in the street. Those who kill wait at the corners of streets when it is night. You say that I take you for a foreigner. You have taken me for an assassin. At your pleasure. So much the worse for me. An assassin! Only this was wanting. It is better that I go back to Subiaco. At least they know me there. Here in Rome — not even dogs would stay here. Beautiful town! Where one is called assassin for breakfast, without counting one, nor two."

By this time Griggs was convinced that he was right. He knew the man well, and all his kind. The long speech of complaint, with its peculiar tone, half insolent, half of injured innocence, was to cover the fellow's embarrassment. Griggs answered him in his own strain.

"A man is not an assassin who kills his enemy for a good reason, Stefanone," he observed. "How do I know what he may have done to you?"

"To me? Nothing." The peasant shrugged his sturdy shoulders.

"Then I have made a mistake," said Griggs.

"You have made a mistake," assented Stefanone. "Let us not talk about it any more."

"Very well."

Griggs turned away and walked slowly towards the hotel, well aware that Stefanone was watching him and would think that he was going to warn Lord Redin of his danger. That, indeed, was Griggs's first impulse, and it was probably his wisest course, whatever might come of the meeting. But the Scotchman had made up his mind that he would not see Griggs under any circumstances, and though the latter had seen him enter the hotel less than ten minutes earlier, the servant returned almost immediately and said that Lord Redin was not at home. Griggs understood and turned away, thoughtfully.

Before he went down the Via Condotti again, he looked over his shoulder towards the steps, and he saw that Stefanone was gone. As he walked along the street, the whole incident began to fade away in his mind, as all real matters so often did, nowadays. All at once he stopped short, and roused himself by an effort — directing his double, as he

would have said, perhaps. There was no denying the fact that a man's life was hanging in the balance of a chance, and to the man, if not to Griggs, that life was worth something. If it had been any other man in the world, even that fact would have left him indifferent enough. Why should he care who lived or died? But Dalrymple was a man he had injured, and he was under an obligation of honour to save him, if he could.

There was only one person in Rome who could help him — Francesca Campodonico. She knew much of what had happened; she might perhaps understand the present case. At all events, even if she had not seen Lord Redin of late, she could not be supposed to have broken relations with him; she could send for him and warn him. The case was urgent, as Griggs knew. After what he had said to Stefanone, the latter, if he meant to kill his man, would not lose a day.

CHAPTER XLV.

It was past midday when Paul Griggs reached the Palazzetto Borgia and inquired for Donna Francesca. He was told that she was out. It was her custom, the porter said, always to breakfast on Sundays with her relatives, the Prince and Princess of Gerano. Griggs asked at what time she might be expected to return. The porter put on a vague look and said that it was impossible to tell. Sometimes she went to Saint Peter's on Sunday afternoon, to hear Vespers. Vespers began at twenty-two o'clock, or half-past twenty-two — between half-past three and four by French time, at that season of the year.

Griggs turned away, and wandered about for half an hour in the vicinity of the palace, uncertain as to what he should do, and yet determined not to lose sight of the necessity for immediate action of some sort. At last he went back to the Piazza di Spagna, intending to write a word of warning to Lord Redin, though he knew that the latter would pay very little attention to anything of such a nature. Like most foreigners, he would laugh at the idea of being attacked in the streets. Even in

an interview it would not be easy to persuade him of the truth which Griggs had discovered more by intuition and through his profound knowledge of the Roman character than by any chain of evidence.

Lord Redin had gone out, he was told. It was impossible to say with any certainty whether this were true or not, and Griggs wrote a few words on his card, sealed the latter in an envelope, and left it to be delivered to the Scotchman. Then he went back to the Via della Frezza, determined to renew his attempt to see Francesca Campodonico, at a later hour.

At the door of the little wine shop Stefanone was seated on one of the rush stools, his hat tilted over his eyes, and his white-stockinged legs crossed. He was smoking and looking down, but he recognized Griggs's step at some distance, and raised his eyes. Griggs nodded to him familiarly, passing along on the other side of the narrow street, and he saw Stefanone's expression. There was a look of cunning and amusement in the contraction of the pale lids, which the younger man did not like. Stefanone spoke to him across the street.

"You are well returned, Signore," he said, in the common phrase of greeting after an absence.

The words were civil enough, but there was something of mockery in the tone. Griggs might not have noticed it at any other time, but his thoughts had been occupied with Stefanone during

the last two hours, and he resented what sounded like insolence. The tone implied that he had been on a fool's errand, and that Stefanone knew it. He said nothing, but stood still and scrutinized the man's face. There was an unwonted colour about the cheek bones, and the keen eyes sparkled under the brim of the soft hat. Stefanone had a solid head, and was not given to drinking, especially in the morning; but Griggs guessed that to-day he had drunk more than usual. The man's next words convinced him of the fact.

"Signore," he said, slowly rising, "will you favour us by tasting the wine I brought last week? There is no one in the shop yet, for it is early. If you will, we can drink a glass."

"Thank you," answered Griggs. "I have not eaten yet."

"Then Sor Angoscia did not ask you to breakfast!" laughed Stefanone, insolently. "At midday, too! It was just the hour! But perhaps he invited you to his supper, for it is ordered."

And he laughed again. Griggs glanced at him once more, and then went quietly on towards his own door. He saw that the man had drunk too much, and the idea of bandying words in the attempt to rebuke him was distasteful. Griggs had very rarely lost his temper, so far as to strike a man, even in former days, and it had seemed to him of late that he could never be really angry

again. Nothing could ever again be of enough importance to make it worth while. If a man of his own class had insulted him, he would have directed his double, as it were, to resent the offence, but he himself would have remained utterly indifferent.

The one-eyed cobbler was not in his place, as it was Sunday. If he had been there, Griggs would very possibly have told him to watch Stefanone and to try and keep him in the wine shop until he should grow heavy over his wine and fall asleep. In that state he would at least be harmless. But the cobbler was not there. Griggs went up to his rooms to wait until a later hour, when he might hope to find Francesca.

Stefanone, being left alone, sat down again, pulled his hat over his eyes once more and felt in his pocket for his clasp-knife. His mind was by no means clear, for he had eaten nothing, he had swallowed a good deal of strong wine, and he had made up his mind that he must kill his enemy on that day or never. The intention was well-defined, but that was all. He had put off his vengeance too long. It was true that he had not yet caught Dalrymple alone in a quiet street at night, that is to say, under the most favourable circumstances imaginable; but more than once he might have fallen upon him suddenly from a doorway in a narrow lane, in which there had been but a few women and children to see the deed, if they saw it

at all. He knew well enough that in Rome the fear of being in any way implicated in a murder, even as a witness, would have made women, and probably men, too, run in-doors or out of the way, rather than interfere or pursue him. He told himself therefore that he had been unreasonably cautious, and that unless he acted quickly Lord Redin, being warned by Griggs, would take measures of self-defence which might put him beyond the reach of the clasp-knife forever. Stefanone's ideas about the power of an 'English lord' were vague in the extreme.

He had not been exactly frightened by Griggs's sudden accusation that morning, but he had been made nervous and vicious by the certainty that his intentions had been discovered. Peasant-like, not being able to hit on a plan for immediate success, he had excited himself and stimulated his courage with drink. His eyes were already a little bloodshot, and the flush on his high cheek bones showed that he was in the first stage of drunkenness, which under present circumstances was the most dangerous and might last all day with a man of his age and constitution, provided that he did not drink too fast. And there was little fear of that, for the Roman is cautious in his cups, and drinks slowly, never wishing to lose his head, and indeed very much ashamed of ever being seen in a helpless condition.

By this time he was well acquainted with Lord Redin's habits; and though Griggs had been told that the Scotchman was out, Stefanone knew very well that he was at home and would not leave the hotel for another hour or more.

Leaning back against the wall and tipping the stool, he swung his white-stockinged legs thoughtfully.

"One must eat," he remarked aloud, to himself.

He held his head a little on one side, thoughtfully considering the question of food. Then he turned his face slowly towards the low door of the shop and sniffed the air. Something was cooking in the back regions within. Stefanone nodded to himself, rose, pulled out a blue and red cotton handkerchief, and proceeded to dust his well-blacked low shoes and steel buckles with considerable care, setting first one foot and then the other upon the stool.

"Let us eat," he said aloud, folding his handkerchief again and returning it to his pocket.

He went in and sat down at one of the trestle tables, — a heavy board, black with age. The host was nodding on a chair in the corner, a fat man in a clean white apron, with a round red face and fat red prominences over his eyes, with thin eyebrows that were scarcely perceptible.

Stefanone rapped on the board with his knuckles; the host awoke, looked at him with a pleased smile,

made an interrogatory gesture, and having received an affirmative nod for an answer retired into the dark kitchen. In a moment he returned with a huge earthenware plate of soup in which a couple of large pieces of fat meat bobbed lazily as he set the dish on the table. Then he brought bread, a measure of wine, an iron spoon, and a two-pronged fork.

Stefanone eat the soup without a word, breaking great pieces of bread into it. Then he pulled out his clasp-knife and opened it; the long blade, keen as a razor and slightly curved, but dark and dull in colour, snapped to its place, as the ring at the back fell into the corresponding sharp notch. With affected delicacy, Stefanone held it between his thumb and one finger and drew the edge across the fat boiled meat, which fell into pieces almost at a touch, though it was tough and stringy. The host watched the operation approvingly. At that time it was forbidden to carry such knives in Rome, unless the point were round and blunt. The Roman always stabs; he never cuts his man's throat in a fight or in a murder.

"It is a prohibited weapon," observed the fat man, smiling, "but it is very beautiful. Poor Christian, if he finds it between his ribs! He would soon be cold. It is a consolation at night to have such a toy."

"Truly, it is the consolation of my soul," answered Stefanone.

"Say a little, dear friend," said the fat man, sitting down and resting his bare elbows upon the table, "that arm, has it ever sent any one to Paradise?"

"And then I should tell you!" exclaimed Stefanone, laughing, and he sipped some wine and smacked his lips. "But no," he added presently. "I am a pacific man. If they touch me — woe! But I, to touch any one? Not even a fly."

"Thus I like men," said the host, "serious, full of scruples, people who drink well, quiet, quiet, and pay better."

"So we are at Subiaco," answered Stefanone.

He cleaned his knife on a piece of bread very carefully, laid it open beside him, and threw the crust to a lean dog that appeared suddenly from beneath the table, as though it had come up through a trap-door; the half-famished creature bolted the bread with a snap and a gulp and disappeared again as suddenly and silently, just in time to avoid the fat man's slow, heavy hand.

When he had finished eating, Stefanone produced his little piece of oilstone, which he carried wrapped in dingy paper, and having greased it proceeded to draw the blade over it slowly and smoothly.

"Apoplexy!" ejaculated the host. "Are you not contented? Or perhaps you wish to shave with it?"

"Thus I keep it," answered the peasant, smil-

ing. "A minute here, a minute there. The time costs nothing. What am I doing? Nothing. I digest. To pass the time I sharpen the knife. I am like this. I say it is a sin to waste time."

Every now and then he sipped his wine, but there was no perceptible change in his manner, for he was careful to keep himself just at the same level of excitement, neither more nor less.

Half an hour later he was smoking his pipe in the Piazza di Spagna, lounging near the great fountain in the sunshine, his eyes generally turned towards the door of the hotel. He waited a long time, and replenished his pipe more than once.

"This would be the only thing wanting," he said impatiently and half aloud. "That just to-day he should not go out."

But Lord Redin appeared at last, dressed as though he were going to make a visit. He looked about the square, standing still on the threshold for a moment, and a couple of small open cabs drove up. But he shook his head, consulted his watch, and strode away in the direction of the Propaganda.

Stefanone guessed that he was going to the Palazzetto Borgia, and followed him as usual at a safe distance, threading the winding ways towards the Piazza di Venezia. There used to be a small café then under the corner of that part of the Palazzo Torlonia which has now been pulled down.

Lord Redin entered it, and Stefanone lingered on the other side of the street. A man passed him who sold melon seeds and aquavitæ, and Stefanone drank a glass of the one and bought a measure of the other. The Romans are fond of the taste of the tiny dry kernel which is found inside the broad white shell of the seed. Presently Lord Redin came out, wiping his mouth with his handkerchief, and went on. Stefanone followed him again, walking fast when his enemy had turned a corner and slackening his speed as soon as he caught sight of him again.

Francesca was out. He saw Lord Redin's look of annoyance as the latter turned away after speaking with the porter, and he fell back into the shadow of a doorway, expecting that the Scotchman would take the street by which he had come. But Dalrymple turned down the narrow lane beside the palace, in the direction of the Tiber. Stefanone's bloodshot eyes opened suddenly as he sprang after him; with a quick movement he got his knife out, opened it, and thrust his hand with it open into the wide pocket of his jacket. Lord Redin had never gone down that lane before, to Stefanone's knowledge, and it was a hundred to one that at that hour no one would be about. Stefanone himself did not know the place.

Dalrymple must have heard the quick and heavy footsteps of the peasant behind him, but it would

not have been at all like him to turn his head. With loose, swinging gait he strode along, and his heavy stick made high little echoes as it struck the dry cobble-stones.

Stefanone was very near him. His eyes glared redly, and his hand with the knife in it was half out of his pocket. In ten steps more he would spring and strike upwards, as Romans do. He chose the spot on the dark overcoat where his knife should go through, below the shoulder-blade, at the height of the small ribs on the left side. His lips were parted and dry.

There was a loud scream of anger, a tremendous clattering noise, and a sound of feet. Stefanone turned suddenly pale, and his hand went to the bottom of his pocket again.

On an open doorstep lay a copper 'conca' — the Roman water jar — a wretched dog was rushing down the street with something in its mouth, in front of Lord Redin, a woman was pursuing it with yells, swinging a small wooden stool in her right hand, to throw it at the dog, and the neighbours were on their doorsteps in a moment. Stefanone slunk under the shadow of the wall, grinding his teeth. The chance was gone. The streets beyond were broader and more populous.

Lord Redin went steadily onward, evidently familiar with every turn of the way, down to the Tiber, across the Bridge of Quattro Capi, and over

the island of Saint Bartholomew to Trastevere, turning then to the right through the straight Lungaretta, past Santa Maria and under the heights of San Pietro in Montorio, and so to the Lungara and by Santo Spirito to the Piazza of Saint Peter's. He walked fast, and Stefanone twice wiped the perspiration from his forehead on the way, for he was nervous from the tension and the disappointment, and felt suddenly weak.

The Scotchman never paused, but crossed the vast square and went up the steps of the basilica. He was evidently going to hear the Vespers. Then Stefanone, instead of following him into the church, sat down outside the wine shop on the right, just opposite the end of the Colonnade. He ordered a measure of wine and prepared to wait, for he guessed that Lord Redin would remain in the church at least an hour.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Lord Redin lifted the heavy leathern curtain of the door on the right of the main entrance to the basilica, and went into the church. For some reason or other, the majority of people go in by that door rather than the other. It may be that the reason is a very simple one, after all. Most people are right handed, and of any two doors side by side leading into the same place, will instinctively take the one on the right. The practice of passing to the left in the street, in almost all old countries, was for the sake of safety, in order that a man might have his sword hand towards any one he met.

The air of the church was warm, and had a faint odour of incense in it. The temperature of the vast building varies but little with the seasons; going into it in winter, it seems warm, in summer it is very cold. On that day there were not many people in the nave, though a soft sound of unceasing footsteps broke the stillness. Very far away an occasional strain of music floated on the air from the Chapel of the Choir, the last on the left before the transept is reached. Lord Redin walked leisurely in the direction of the sound.

The chapel was full, and the canons were inton-

ing the psalms of the office. At the conclusion of each one the choir sang the 'Gloria' from the great organ loft on the right. It chanced that there were a number of foreigners on that day, and they had filled all the available space within the gate, and there was a small crowd outside, pressing as close as possible in order to hear the voices more distinctly. Lord Redin was taller than most men, and looking over the heads of the others he saw Francesca Campodonico's pale profile in the thick of the press. She evidently wished to extricate herself, and she seemed to be suffering from the closeness, for she pressed her handkerchief nervously to her lips, and her eyes were half closed. Lord Redin forced his way to her without much consideration for the people who hindered him. A few minutes later he brought her out on the side towards the transept.

"Thank you," said Francesca. "I should like to sit down. I had almost fainted — there was a woman next to me who had musk about her."

They went round the pillar of the dome to the south transept where there are almost always a number of benches set along the edges of a huge green baize carpet. They sat down together on the end of one of the seats.

"We can go back, by and bye, and hear the music, if you like," said Francesca. "The psalms will last some time longer."

"I would rather sit here and talk, since I have had the good luck to meet you," answered Lord Redin, resting his elbows on his knees, and idly poking the green carpet with the end of his stick. "I went to your house, and they told me that you would very probably be here."

"Yes. I often come. But you know that, for we have met here before. I only stay at home on Sundays when it rains."

"Oh! Is that the rule?"

"Yes, if you call it a rule," answered Francesca.

"I like to know about the things you do, and how you spend your life," said the Scotchman, thoughtfully.

"Do you? Why? There is nothing very interesting about my existence, it seems to me."

"It interests me. It makes me feel less lonely to know about some one else — some one I like very much."

Francesca looked at her companion with an expression of pity. She was lonely, too, but in a different way. The little drama of her life had run sadly and smoothly. She was willing to give the man her friendship if it could help him, rather because he seemed to ask for it in a mute fashion than because she desired his.

"Lord Redin," she said, after a little pause, "do you always mean to live in this way?"

"Alone? Yes. It is the only way I can live, at my age."

"At your age — would it make any difference if you were younger?" asked Francesca. She dropped her voice to a low key. "You would never marry again, even if you were much younger."

"Marry!" His shoulders moved with a sort of little start. "You do not know what you are saying!" he added, almost under his breath, though she heard the words distinctly.

She looked at him again, in silence, during several seconds, and she saw how the colour sank away from his face, till the skin was like old parchment. The hand that held the heavy stick tightened round it and grew yellow at the knuckles.

"Forgive me," she said gently. "I am very thoughtless — it is the second time."

He did not speak for some moments, but she understood his silence and waited. The air was very quiet, and the enormous pillar of the dome almost completely shut off the echo of the distant music. The low afternoon sun streamed levelly through the great windows of the apse, for the basilica is built towards the west. There were very few people in the church that day. The sun made visible beams across the high shadows overhead.

Suddenly Lord Redin spoke again. There was

something weak and tremulous in the tone of his rough voice.

"I am very much attached to you, for two reasons," he said. "We have known each other long, but not intimately."

"That is true. Not very intimately."

Francesca did not know exactly what to say. But for his manner and for his behaviour a few moments earlier, she might have fancied that he was about to offer himself to her, but such an idea was very far from her thoughts. Her woman's instinct told her that he was going to tell her something in the nature of a confidence.

"Precisely," he continued. "We have never been intimate. The reason why we have not been intimate is one of the reasons why I am more attached to you than you have ever guessed."

"That is complicated," said Francesca, with a smile. "Perhaps the other reason may be simpler."

"It is very simple, very simple indeed, though it will not seem natural to you. You are the only very good woman I ever knew, who made me feel that she was good instead of making me see it. Perhaps you think it unnatural that I should be attracted by goodness at all. But I am not very bad, as men go."

"No. I do not believe you are. And I am not so good as you think." She sighed softly.

"You are much better than I once thought," answered Lord Redin. "Once upon a time — well, I should only offend you, and I know better now. Forgive me for thinking of it. I wish to tell you something else."

"If it is something which has been your secret, it is better not told," said Francesca, quietly. "One rarely makes a confidence that one does not regret it."

"You are a wise woman." He looked at her thoughtfully. "And yet you must be very young."

"No. But though I have had my own life apart, I have lived outwardly very much in the world, although I am still young. Most of the secrets which have been told me have been repeated to me by the people in whom others had confided."

"All that is true," he answered. "Nevertheless —" He paused. "I am desperate!" he exclaimed, with sudden energy. "I cannot bear this any longer — I am alone, always, always. Sometimes I think I shall go mad! You do not know what a life I lead. I have not even a vice to comfort me!" He laughed low and savagely. "I tried to drink, but I am sick of it — it does no good! A man who has not even a vice is a very lonely man."

Francesca's clear eyes opened wide with a startled look, and gazed towards his averted face, trying to catch his glance. She felt that she was close to

something very strong and dreadful which she could not understand.

"Do not speak like that!" she said. "No one is lonely who believes in God."

"God!" he exclaimed bitterly. "God has forgotten me, and the devil will not have me!" He looked at her at last, and saw her face. "Do not be shocked," he said, with a sorrowful smile. "If I were as bad as I seem to you just now, I should have cut my throat twenty years ago."

"Hush! Hush!" Francesca did not know what to say.

His manner changed a little, and he spoke more calmly.

"I am not eloquent," he said, looking into her eyes. "You may not understand. But I have suffered a great deal."

"Yes. I know that. I am very sorry for you."

"I think you are," he answered. "That is why I want to be honest and tell you the truth about myself. For that reason, and because I cannot bear it any longer. I cannot, I cannot!" he repeated in a low, despairing tone.

"If it will help you to tell me, then tell me," said Francesca, kindly. "But I do not ask you to. I do not see why we should not be the best of friends without my knowing this thing which weighs on your mind."

"You will understand when I have told you,"

answered Lord Redin. "Then you can judge whether you will have me for a friend or not. It will seem very bad to you. Perhaps it is. I never thought so. But you are a Roman Catholic, and that makes a difference."

"Not in a question of right and wrong."

"It makes the question what it is. You shall hear."

He paused a moment, and the lines and furrows deepened in his face. The sun was sinking fast, and the long beams had faded away out of the shadows. There was no one in sight now, but the music of the benediction service echoed faintly in the distance. Francesca felt her heart beating with a sort of excitement she could not understand, and though she did not look at her companion, her ears were strained to catch the first word he spoke.

"I married a nun," he said simply.

Francesca started.

"A Sister of Charity?" she asked, after a moment's dead silence. "They do not take vows —"

"No. A nun from the Carmelite Convent of Subiaco."

His words were very distinct. There was no mistaking what he said. Francesca shrank from him instinctively, and uttered a low exclamation of repugnance and horror.

"That is not all," continued Lord Redin, with a

calm that seemed supernatural. "She was your kinswoman. She was Maria Braccio, whom every one believed was burned to death in her cell."

"But her body — they found it! It is impossible!" She thought he must be mad.

"No. They found another body. I put it into the bed and set fire to the mattress. It was burned beyond recognition, and they thought it was Maria. But it was the body of old Stefanone's daughter. I lived in his house. The girl poisoned herself with some of my chemicals — I was a young doctor in those days. Maria and I were married on board an English man-of-war, and we lived in Scotland after that. Gloria was the daughter of Maria Braccio, the Carmelite nun — your kinswoman."

Francesca pressed her handkerchief to her lips. She felt as though she were losing her senses. Minute after minute passed, and she could say nothing. From time to time, Lord Redin glanced sideways at her. He breathed hard once or twice, and his hands strained upon his stick as though they would break it in two.

"Then she died," he said. When he had spoken the three words, he shivered from head to foot, and was silent.

Still Francesca could not speak. The sacrilege of the deed was horrible in itself. To her, who had grown up to look upon Maria Braccio as a holy woman, cut off in her youth by a frightful death,

the truth was overwhelmingly awful. She strove within herself to find something upon which she could throw the merest shadow of an extenuation, but she could find nothing.

"You understand now why, as an honourable man, I wished to tell you the truth about myself," he said, speaking almost coldly in the effort he was making at self-control. "I could not ask for your friendship until I had told you."

Francesca turned her white face slowly towards him in the dusk, and her lips moved, but she did not speak. She could not in that first moment find the words she wanted. She felt that she shrank from him, that she never wished to touch his hand again. Doubtless, in time, she might get over the first impression. She wished that he would leave her to think about it.

"Can you ever be my friend now?" he asked gravely.

"Your friend —" she stopped, and shook her head sadly. "I — I am afraid —" she could not go on.

Lord Redin rose slowly to his feet.

"No. I am afraid not," he said.

He waited a moment, but there was no reply.

"May I take you to your carriage?" he asked gently.

"No, thank you. No — that is — I am going home in a cab. I would rather be alone — please."

"Then good-bye."

The lonely man went away and left her there. His head was bent, and she thought that he walked unsteadily, as she watched him. Suddenly a great wave of pity filled her heart. He looked so very lonely. What right had she to judge him? Was she perfect, because he called her good? She called him before he turned the great pillar of the dome.

"Lord Redin! Lord Redin!"

But her voice was weak, and in the vast, dim place it did not reach him. He went on alone, past the high altar, round the pillar, down the nave. The benediction service was not quite over yet, but every one who was not listening to the music had left the church. He went towards the door by which he had entered. Before going out he paused, and looked towards the little chapel on the right of the entrance. He hesitated, and then went to it and stood leaning with his hands upon the heavy marble balustrade, that was low for his great height as he stood on the step.

A single silver lamp sent a faint light upwards that lingered upon the Pietà above the altar, upon the marble limbs of the dead Christ, upon the features of the Blessed Virgin, the Addolorata — the sorrowing mother.

Bending a little, as though very weary, the friendless, wifeless, childless man raised his furrowed

face and looked up. There was no hope any more, and his despair was heavy upon him whose young love had blasted the lives of many.

His teeth were set — he could have bitten through iron. He trembled a little, and as he looked upward, two dreadful tears — the tears of the strong that are as blood — welled from his eyes and trickled down upon his cheeks.

"Maria Addolorata!" he whispered.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Francesca had half risen from her seat when she had seen that Lord Redin did not hear her voice, calling to him. Then she realized that she could not overtake him without running, since he had got so far, and she kept her place, leaning back once more, and trying to collect her thoughts before going home. The music was still going on in the Chapel of the Choir, and though it was dusk in the vast church, it would not be dark for some time. The vergers did not make their rounds to give warning of the hour of closing until sunset. Francesca sat still and tried to understand what she had heard. She was nervous and shaken, and she wished that she were already at home. The great dimness of the lonely transept was strangely mysterious — and the tale of the dead girl, burned to take the place of the living, was grewsome, and made her shiver with disgust and horror. She started nervously at the sound of a distant footstep.

But the strongest impression she had, was that of abhorrence for the unholy deeds of the man who had just left her. To a woman for whom religion

in its forms as well as in its meaning was the mainstay of life on earth and the hope of life to come, the sacrilege of the crime seemed supernatural. She felt as though it must be in some way her duty to help in expiating it, lest the punishment of it should fall upon all her race. And as she thought it over, trying to look at it as simply as she could, she surveyed at a glance the whole chain of the fatal story, and saw how many terrible things had followed upon that one great sin, and how very nearly she herself had been touched by its consequences. She had been involved in it and had become a part of it. She had felt it about her for years, in her friendship for Reanda. It had contributed to the causes of his death, if it had not actually caused it. She, in helping to bring about his marriage with the daughter of her sinning kinswoman, had unconsciously made a link in the chain. Her friendship for the artist no longer looked as innocent as formerly. Gloria had accused him of loving her, Francesca. Had she not loved him? Whether she had or not, she had done things which had wounded his innocent young wife. In a sudden and painful illumination of the past, she saw that she herself had not been sinless; that she had been selfish, if nothing worse; that she had craved Reanda's presence and devoted friendship, if nothing more; that death had taken from her more

than a friend. She saw all at once the vanity of her own belief in her own innocence, and she accused herself very bitterly of many things which had been quite hidden from her until then.

She was roused by a footstep behind her, and she started at the sound of a voice she knew, but which had changed oddly since she had last heard it. It was stern, deep, and clear still, but the life was gone out of it. It had an automatic sound.

"I beg your pardon, Princess," said Paul Griggs, stopping close to her behind the bench. "May I speak to you for a moment?"

She turned her head. As the sun went down, the church grew lighter for a little while, as it often does. Yet she could hardly see the man's eyes at all, as she looked into his face. They were all in the shadow and had no light in them.

"Sit down," she said mechanically.

She could not refuse to speak to him, and, indeed, she would not have refused to receive him had she been at home when he had called that day. Socially speaking, according to the standards of those around her, he had done nothing which she could very severely blame. A woman he had dearly loved had come to him for protection, and he had not driven her away. That was the social value of what he had done. The moral view of it all was individual with herself. Society gave her no right to treat him rudely because she disapproved of his

past life. For the rest, she had liked him in former times, and she believed that there was much more good in him than at first appeared.

She was almost glad that he had disturbed her solitude just then, for a nervous sense of loneliness was creeping upon her; and though there had been nothing to prevent her from rising and going away, she had felt that something was holding her in her seat, a shadowy something that was oppressive and not natural, that descended upon her out of the gloomy heights, and that rose around her from the secret depths below, where the great dead lay side by side in their leaden coffins.

"Sit down," she repeated, as Griggs came round the bench.

He sat down beside her. There was a little distance between them, and he sat rather stiffly, holding his hat on his knees.

"I should apologize for disturbing you," he began. "I have been twice to your house to-day, but you were out. What I wish to speak of is rather urgent. I heard that you might be here, and so I came."

"Yes," she said, and waited for him to say more.

"What is it?" she asked presently, as he did not speak at once.

"It is about Dalrymple — about Lord Redin," he said at last. "You used to know him. Do you ever see him now?"

Francesca looked at him with a little surprise, but she answered quietly, as though the question were quite a natural one.

"He was here five minutes ago. Yes, I often see him."

"Would you do him a service?" asked Griggs, in his calm and indifferent tone.

He was forcing himself to do what was plainly his duty, but he was utterly incapable of taking any interest in the matter. Francesca hesitated before she answered. An hour earlier she would have assented readily enough, but now the idea of doing anything which could tend to bring her into closer relations with Lord Redin was disagreeable.

"I do not think you will refuse," said Griggs, as she did not speak. "His life is in danger."

She turned quickly and scrutinized the expressionless features. In the glow of the sunset the church was quite light. The total unconcern of the man's manner contrasted strangely with the importance of what he said. Francesca felt that something must be wrong.

"You say that very coolly," she observed, and her tone showed that she was incredulous.

"And you do not believe me," answered Griggs, quite unmoved. "It is natural, I suppose. I will try to explain."

"Please do. I do not understand at all."

Nevertheless, she was startled, though she concealed her nervousness. She had not spoken with Griggs for a long time; and as he talked, she saw what a great change had taken place. He was very quiet, as he had always been, but he was almost too quiet. She could not make out his eyes. She knew of his superhuman strength, and his stillness seemed unnatural. What he said did not sound rational. An impression got hold of her that he had gone mad, and she was physically afraid of him. He began to explain. She felt a singing in her ears, and she could not follow what he said. It was like an evil dream, and it grew upon her second by second.

He talked on in the same even, monotonous tone. The words meant nothing to her. She crossed her feet nervously and tried to get a soothing sensation by stroking her sable muff. She made a great effort at concentration and failed to understand anything.

All at once it grew dark, as the sunset light faded out of the sky. Again she felt the desire to rise and the certainty that she could not, if she tried. He ceased speaking and seemed to expect her to say something, but she had not understood a word of his long explanation. He sat patiently waiting. She could hardly distinguish his face in the gloom.

The sound of irregular, shuffling footsteps and

low voices moved the stillness. The vergers were making their last round in a hurried, perfunctory way. They passed across the transept to the high altar. It was so dark that Francesca could only just see their shadows moving in the blackness. She did not realize what they were doing, and her imagination made ghosts of them, rushing through the silence of the deserted place, from one tomb to another, waking the dead for the night. They did not even glance across, as they skirted the wall of the church. Even if they had looked, they might not have seen two persons in black, against the blackness, sitting silently side by side on the dark bench. They saw nothing and passed on, out of sight and out of hearing.

"May I ask whether you will give him the message?" inquired Griggs at last, moving in his seat, for he knew that it was time to be going.

Francesca started, at the sound of his voice.

"I — I am afraid — I have not understood," she said. "I beg your pardon — I was not paying attention. I am nervous."

"It is growing late," said Griggs. "We had better be going — I will tell you again as we walk to the door."

"Yes — no — just a moment!" She made a strong effort over herself. "Tell me in three words," she said. "Who is it that threatens Lord Redin's life?"

"A peasant of Subiaco called Stefanone. Really, Princess, we must be going; it is quite dark — "

"Stefanone!" exclaimed Francesca, while he was speaking the last words, which she did not hear. "Stefanone of Subiaco — of course!"

"We must really be going," said Griggs, rising to his feet, and wondering indifferently why it was so hard to make her understand.

She rose to her feet slowly. Lord Redin's story was intricately confused in her mind with the few words which she had retained of what Griggs had said.

"Yes — yes — Stefanone," she said in a low voice, as though to herself, and she stood still, comprehending the whole situation in a flash, and imagining that Griggs knew the whole truth and had been telling it to her as though she had not known it. "But how did you know that Lord Redin took the girl's body and burnt it?" she asked, quite certain that he had mentioned the fact.

"What girl?" asked Griggs in wonder.

"Why, the body of Stefanone's daughter, which he managed to burn in the convent when he carried off my cousin! How did you know about it?

"I did not know about it," said Griggs. "Your cousin? I do not understand."

"My cousin — yes — Maria Braccio — Gloria's mother! You have just been talking about her — "

"I?" asked Griggs, bewildered.

Francesca stepped back from him, suddenly guessing that she had revealed Lord Redin's secret.

"Is it possible?" she asked in a low voice. "Oh, it is all a mistake!" she cried suddenly. "I have told you his story — oh, I am losing my head!"

"Come," said Griggs, authoritatively. "We must get out of the church, at all events, or we shall be locked in."

"Oh no!" answered Francesca. "There is always somebody here —"

"There is not. You must really come."

"Yes — but there is no danger of being locked in. Yes — let us walk down the nave. There is more light."

They walked slowly, for she was too much confused to hasten her steps. Her inexplicable mistake troubled her terribly. She remembered how she had warned Lord Redin not to tell her any secrets, and how seriously she, the most discreet of women, had resolved never to reveal what he had said. But the impression of his story had been so much more direct and strong than even the first words Griggs had spoken, that so soon as she had realized that the latter was speaking approximately of the same subject, she had lost the thread of what he was saying and had seemed to hear Lord Redin's dreadful tale all over again. She thought that she was losing her head.

It was almost quite dark when they reached the other side of the high altar. Griggs walked beside her in silence, trying to understand the meaning of what she had said.

The gloom was terrible. The enormous statues loomed faintly like vast ghosts, high up, between the floor and the roof, their whiteness glimmering where there seemed to be nothing else but darkness below them and above them. A low, far sound that was a voice but not a word, trembled in the air. Francesca shuddered.

"They have not gone yet," said Griggs. "They are still talking. But we must hurry."

"No," said Francesca, "that was not any one talking." And her teeth chattered. "Give me your arm, please — I am frightened."

He held out his arm till she could feel it in the dark, and she took it. He pressed her hand to his side and drew her along, for he feared that the doors might be already shut.

"Not so fast! Oh, not so fast, please!" she cried. "I shall fall. They do not shut the doors — "

"Yes, they do! Let me carry you. I can run with you in the dark — there is no time to be lost!"

"No, no! I can walk faster — but there is really no danger — "

It is a very long way from the high altar to the main entrance of the church. Francesca was

breathless when they reached the door and Griggs lifted the heavy leathern curtain. If the door had been still open, he would have seen the twilight from the porch at once. Instead, all was black and close and smelled of leather. Francesca was holding his sleeve, afraid of losing him.

"It is too late," he said quietly. "We are probably locked in. We will try the door of the Sacristy."

He seized her arm and hurried her along into the south aisle. He struck his shoulder violently against the base of the pillar he passed in the darkness, but he did not stop. Almost instinctively he found the door, for he could not see it. Even the hideous skeleton which supports a black marble drapery above it was not visible in the gloom. He found the bevelled edge of the smoothly polished panel and pushed. But it would not yield.

"We are locked in," he said, in the same quiet tone as before.

Francesca uttered a low cry of terror and then was silent.

"Cannot you break the door?" she asked suddenly.

"No," he answered. "Nothing short of a battering-ram could move it."

"Try," she said. "You are so strong — the lock might give way."

To satisfy her he braced himself and heaved

against the panel with all his gigantic strength. In the dark she could hear his breath drawn through his nostrils.

"It will not move," he said, desisting. "We shall have to spend the night here. I am very sorry."

For some moments Francesca said nothing, overcome by her terror of the situation. Griggs stood still, with his back to the polished door, trying to see her in the gloom. Then he felt her closer to him and heard her small feet moving on the pavement.

"We must make the best of it," he said at last. "It is never quite dark near the high altar. I daresay, too, that there is still a little twilight where we were sitting. At least, there is a carpet there and there are benches. We can sit there until it is later. Then you can lie down upon the bench. I will make a pillow for you with my overcoat. It is warm, and I shall not need it."

He made a step forwards, and she heard him moving.

"Do not leave me!" she cried, in sudden terror.

He felt her grasp his arm convulsively in the dark, and he felt her hands shaking.

"Do not be frightened," he said, in his quiet voice. "Dead people do no harm, you know. It is only imagination."

She shuddered as he groped his way with her

toward the nave. They passed the pillar and saw the soft light of the ninety little flames of the huge golden lamps around the central shrine below the high altar. Far beyond, the great windows showed faintly in the height of the blackness. They walked more freely, keeping in the middle of the church. In the distant chapels on each side a few little lamps glimmered like fireflies. Before the last chapel on the right, the Chapel of the Sacrament, Francesca paused, instinctively holding fast to Griggs's arm, and they both bent one knee, as all Catholics do, who pass before it. But when they reached the shrine, Francesca loosed her hold and sank upon her knees, resting her arms upon the broad marble of the balustrade. Griggs knelt a moment beside her, by force of habit, then rose and waited, looking about him into the depths of blackness, and reflecting upon the best spot in which to pass the night.

She remained kneeling a long time, praying more or less consciously, but aware that it was a relief to be near a little light after passing through the darkness. Her mind was as terribly confused as her companion's was utterly calm and indifferent. If he had been alone he would have sat down upon a step until he was sleepy and then he would have stretched himself upon one of the benches in the transept. But to Francesca it was unspeakably dreadful.

The strangeness of the whole situation forced itself upon her more and more, when she thought of rising from her knees and going back to the bench. She felt a womanly shyness about keeping close to her companion, her hand on his arm, for hours together, but she knew that the terror she should feel of being left alone, even for an instant, or of merely thinking that she was to be left alone, would more than overcome that if she went away from the lights. She would grasp his arm and hold it tightly.

Then she felt ashamed of herself. She had always been told that she came of a brave race. She had never been in danger, and there was really no danger now. It was absurd to remain on her knees for the sake of the lamps. She rose to her feet and turned. Griggs was not looking at her, but at the ornaments on the altar. The soft glimmer lighted up his dark face. A moment after she had risen he came forward. She meant to propose that they should go back to the transept, but just then she shuddered again.

"Let us sit down here, on the step," she said, suddenly.

"If you like," he answered. "Wait a minute," he added, and he pulled off his overcoat.

He spread a part of it on the step, and rolled the rest into a pillow against which she could lean, and he held it in place while she sat down. She

thanked him, and he sat down beside her. At first, as she turned from the lamps, the nave was like a fathomless black wall. Neither spoke for some time. Griggs broke the silence when he supposed that she was sufficiently recovered to talk quietly, for he had been thinking of what she had said, and it was almost clear to him at last.

"I should like to speak to you quite frankly, if you will allow me," he said gravely. "May I?"

"Certainly."

"The few words you said about Lord Redin's story have explained a great many things which I never understood," said Griggs. "Is it too much to ask that you should tell me everything you know?"

"I would rather not say anything more," answered Francesca. "I am very much ashamed of having betrayed his secret. Besides, what is to be gained by your knowing a few more details? It is bad enough as it is."

"It is more or less the story of my life," he said, almost indifferently.

She turned her head slowly and tried to see his face. She could just distinguish the features, cold and impassive.

"I came to you to ask you to warn Dalrymple of a danger," he continued, as she did not speak. "I knew that fact, but not the reason why his life was and is threatened. Unless I have mistaken what

you said, I understand it now. It is a much stronger one than I should ever have guessed. Lord Redin ran away with your cousin, and made it appear that he had carried off Stefanone's daughter. Stefanone has waited patiently for nearly a quarter of a century. He has found Dalrymple at last and means to kill him. He will succeed, unless you can make Dalrymple understand that the danger is real. I have no evidence on which I could have the man arrested, and I have no personal influence in Rome. You have. You would find no difficulty in having Stefanone kept out of the city. And you can make Dalrymple see the truth, since he has confided in you. Will you do that? He will not believe me, and you can save him. Besides, he will not see me. I have tried twice to-day. He has made up his mind that he will not see me."

"I will do my best," said Francesca, leaning her head back against the marble rail, and half closing her eyes. "How terrible it all is!"

"Yes. I suppose that is the word," said Griggs, indifferently. "Sacrilege, suicide, and probably murder to come."

She was shocked by the perfectly emotionless way in which he spoke of Gloria's death, so much shocked that she drew a short, quick breath between her teeth as though she had hurt herself. Griggs heard it.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing," she said.

"I thought something hurt you."

"No — nothing."

She was silent again.

"Yes," he continued, in a tone of cold speculation, "I suppose that any one would call it terrible. At all events, it is curious, as a sequence of cause and effect, from one tragedy to another."

"Please — please do not speak of it all like that — " Francesca felt herself growing angry with him.

"How should I speak of it?" he asked. "It is an extraordinary concatenation of events. I look upon the whole thing as very curious, especially since you have given me the key to it all."

Francesca was moved to anger, taking the defence of the dead Gloria, as almost any woman would have done. At the moment Paul Griggs repelled her even more than Lord Redin. It seemed to her that there was something dastardly in his indifference.

"Have you no heart?" she asked suddenly.

"No, I am dead," he answered, in his clear, lifeless voice, that might have been a ghost's.

The words made her shiver, and she felt as though her hair were moving. From his face, as she had last seen it, and from his voice, he might almost have been dead, as he said he was, like the

thousands of silent ones in the labyrinths under her feet, and she alone alive in the midst of so much death.

"What do you mean?" she asked, and her own voice trembled in spite of herself.

"It is very like being dead," he answered thoughtfully. "I cannot feel anything. I cannot understand why any one else should. Everything is the same to me. The world is a white blank to me, and one place is exactly like any other place."

"But why? What has happened to you?" asked Francesca.

"You know. You sent me those letters."

"What letters?"

"The package Reanda gave you before he died."

"Yes. What was in it? I told you that I did not know, when I wrote to you. I remember every word I wrote."

"I know. But I thought that you at least guessed. They were Gloria's letters to her husband."

"Her old letters, before —" Francesca stopped short.

"No," he answered, with the same unnatural quiet. "All the letters she wrote him afterwards — when we were together."

"All those letters?" cried Francesca, suddenly understanding. "Oh no — no! It is not possible!

He could not, he would not, have done anything so horrible."

"He did," said Griggs, calmly. "I had supposed that she loved me. He had his vengeance. He proved to me that she did not. I hope he is satisfied with the result. Yes," he continued, after a moment's pause, "it was the cruelest thing that ever one man did to another. I spent a bad night, I remember. On the top of the package was the last letter she wrote him, just before she killed herself. She loathed me, she said, she hated me, she shivered at my touch. She feared me so that she acted a comedy of love, in terror of her life, after she had discovered that she hated me. She need not have been afraid. Why should I have hurt her? In that last letter, she put her wedding ring with a lock of her hair wound in and out of it. Reanda knew what he was doing when he sent it to me. Do you wonder that it has deadened me to everything?"

"Oh, how could he do it? How could he!" Francesca repeated, for the worst of it all to her was the unutterable cruelty of the man she had believed so gentle.

"I suppose it was natural," said Griggs. "I loved the woman, and he knew it. I fancy few men have loved much more sincerely than I loved her, even after she was dead. I was not always saying so. I am not that kind of man. Besides,

men who live by stringing words together for money do not value them much in their own lives. But I worked for her. I did the best I could. Even she must have known that I loved her."

"I know you did. I cannot understand how you can speak of her at all." Francesca wondered at the man.

"She? She is no more to me than Queen Christina, over there in her tomb in the dark! For that matter, nothing else has any meaning, either."

For a long time Francesca said nothing. She sat quite still, resting the back of her head against the marble, in the awful silence under the faint lights that glimmered above the great tomb.

"You have told me the most dreadful thing I ever heard," she said at last, in a low tone. "Is she nothing to you? Really nothing? Can you never think kindly of her again?"

"No. Why should I? That is —" he hesitated. "I could not explain it," he said, and was silent.

"It does not seem human," said Francesca. "You would have a memory of her — something — some touch of sadness — I wonder whether you really loved her as much as you thought you did?"

Griggs turned upon Francesca slowly, his hands clasped upon one knee.

"You do not know what such love means," he

said slowly. "It is God — faith — goodness — everything. It is heaven on earth, and earth in heaven, in one heart. When it is gone there is nothing left. It went hard. It will not come back now. The heart itself is gone. There is nothing for it to come to. You think me cold, you are shocked because I speak indifferently of her. She lied to me. She lied and acted in every word and deed of her life with me. She deceived herself a little at first, and she deceived me mortally afterwards. It was all an immense, loathsome, deadly lie. I lived through the truth. Why should I wish to go back to the lie again? She died, telling me that she died for me. She died, having written to Reanda that she died for him. I do not judge her. God will. But God Himself could not make me love the smallest shadow of her memory. It is impossible. I am beyond life. I am outside it. My eternity has begun."

"Is it not a little for her sake that you wish to save her father?" asked Francesca.

"No. It is a matter of honour, and nothing else, since I injured him, as the world would say, by taking his daughter from her husband. Do you understand? Can you put yourself a little in my position? It is not because I care whether he lives or dies, or dies a natural death or is stabbed in the back by a peasant. It is because I ought to care. I do many things because I ought to care

to do them, though the things and their consequences are all one to me, now."

"It cannot last," said Francesca, sadly. "You will change as you grow older."

"No. That is a thing you can never understand," he answered. "I am two individuals. The one is what you see, a man more or less like other men, growing older — a man who has a certain mortal, earthly memory of that dead woman, when the real man is unconscious. But the real man is beyond growing old, because he is beyond feeling anything. He is stationary, outside of life. The world is a blank to him and always will be."

His voice grew more and more expressionless as he spoke. Francesca felt that she could not pity him as she had pitied poor Lord Redin when she had seen him going away alone. The man beside her was in earnest, and was as far beyond woman's pity as he was beyond woman's love. Yet she no longer felt repelled by him since she had understood what he had suffered. Perhaps she herself, suffering still in her heart, wished that she might be even as he was, beyond the possibility of pain, even though beyond the hope of happiness. He wanted nothing, he asked for nothing, and he was not afraid to be alone with his own soul, as she was sometimes. The other man had asked for her friendship. It could mean nothing to Paul Griggs. If love were nothing, what could friendship be?

Yet there was something lofty and grand about such loneliness as his. She could not but feel that, now that she knew all. She thought of him as she sat beside him in the monumental silence of the enormous sepulchre, and she guessed of depths in his soul like the deepness of the shadows above her and before her and around her.

"My suffering seems very small, compared with yours," she said softly, almost to herself.

Somehow she knew that he would understand her, though perhaps her knowledge was only hope.

"Why should you suffer at all?" he asked. "You have never done anything wrong. Nothing, of all this, is your fault. It was all fatal, from the first, and you cannot blame yourself for anything that has happened."

"I do," she answered, in a low voice. "Indeed I do."

"You are wrong. You are not to blame. Dalrymple was — Maria Braccio — I — Gloria — we four. But you! What have you done? Compared with us you are a saint on earth!"

She hesitated a moment before she spoke. Then her voice came in a broken way.

"I loved Angelo Reanda. I know it, now that I have lost him."

Griggs barely heard the last words, but he bent his head gravely, and said nothing in answer.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The stillness was all around them and seemed to fold them together as they sat side by side. A deep sigh quivered and paused and was drawn again almost with a gasp that stirred the air. Suddenly Francesca's face was hidden in her hands, and her head was bowed almost to her knees. A moment more, and she sobbed aloud, wordless, as though her soul were breaking from her heart.

In the great gloom there was something unearthly in the sound of her weeping. The man who could neither suffer any more himself nor feel human pity for another's suffering, turned and looked at her with shadowy eyes. He understood, though he could not feel, and he knew that she had borne more than any one had guessed.

She shed many tears, and it was long before her sobbing ceased to call down pitiful, heart-breaking echoes from the unseen heights of darkness. Her head was bent down upon her knees as she sat there, striving with herself.

He could do nothing, and there was nothing that he could say. He could not comfort her, he could not deny her grief. He only knew that there was

one more being still alive and bearing the pain of sins done long ago. Truly the judgment upon that man by whom the offence had come, should be heavy and relentless and enduring.

At last all was still again. Francesca did not move, but sat bowed together, her hands pressing her face. Very softly, Griggs rose to his feet, and she did not see that he was no longer seated beside her. He stood up and leaned upon the broad marble of the balustrade. When she at last raised her head, she thought that he was gone.

"Where are you?" she asked, in a startled voice.

Then, looking round, she saw him standing by the rail. She understood why he had moved — that she might not feel that he was watching her and seeing her tears.

"I am not ashamed," she said. "At least you know me, now."

"Yes. I know."

She also rose and stood up, and leaned upon the balustrade and looked into his face.

"I am glad you know," she said, and he saw how pale she was, and that her cheeks were wet. "Now that it is over, I am glad that you know," she said again. "You are beyond sympathy, and beyond pitying any one, though you are not unkind. I am glad, that if any one was to know my secret, it should be you. I could not bear pity. It would hurt me. But you are not unkind."

"Nor kind — nor anything," he said.

"No. It is as though I had spoken to the grave — or to eternity. It is safe with you."

"Yes. Quite safe. Safer than with the dead."

"He never knew it. Thank God! He never knew it! To me he was always the same faithful friend. To you he was an enemy, and cruel. I thought him above cruelty, but he was human, after all. Was it not human, that he should be cruel to you?"

"Yes," answered Griggs, wondering a little at her speech and tone. "It was very human."

"And you forgive him for it?"

"I?" There was surprise in his tone.

"Yes," she answered. "I want your forgiveness for him. He died without your forgiveness. It is the only thing I ask of you — I have not the right to ask anything, I know, but is it so very much?"

"It is nothing," said Griggs. "There is no such thing as forgiveness in my world. How could there be? I resent nothing."

"But then, if you do not resent what he did, you have forgiven him. Have you not?"

"I suppose so." He was puzzled.

"Will you not say it?" she pleaded.

"Willingly," he answered. "I forgive him. I remember nothing against him."

"Thank you. You are a good man."

He shook his head gravely, but he took her outstretched hand and pressed it gently.

"Thank you," she repeated, withdrawing hers. "Do not think it strange that I should ask such a thing. It means a great deal to me. I could not bear to think that he had left an enemy in the world and was gone where he could not ask forgiveness for what he had done. So I asked it of you, for him. I know that he would have wished me to. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Griggs, thoughtfully. "I understand."

Again there was silence for a long time as they stood there. The tears dried upon the woman's sweet pale face, and a soft light came where the tears had been.

"Will you come with me?" she asked at last, looking up.

He did not guess what she meant to do, but he left the step on which he was standing and stood ready.

"It must be late," he said. "Should you like to try and rest? I will arrange a place for you as well as I can."

"Not yet," she answered. "If you will come with me —" she hesitated.

"Yes?"

"I will say a prayer for the dead," she said, in a low voice. "I always do, every night, since he died."

Griggs bent his head, and she came down from

the step. He walked beside her, down the silent nave into the darkness. Before the Chapel of the Sacrament they both paused and bent the knee. Then she hesitated.

"I should like to go to the Pietà," she said timidly. "It seems so far. Do you mind?"

He held out his arm silently. She felt it and laid her hand upon it, and they went on. It was very dark. They knew that they were passing the pillars when they could not see the little lights from the chapels in the distance on their left. Then by the echo of their own footsteps they knew that they were near the great door, and at last they saw the single tiny flame in the silver lamp hanging above the altar they sought.

Guided by it, they went forward, and the solitary ray showed them the marble rail. They knelt down side by side.

"Let us pray for them all," said Francesca, very softly.

She looked up to the marble face of Christ's mother, the Addolorata, the mother of sorrows, and she thought of that sinning nun, dead long ago, who had been called Addolorata.

"Let us pray for them all," she repeated. "For Maria Braccio, for Gloria — for Angelo Reanda."

She lowered her head upon her hands. Then, presently, she looked up again, and Griggs heard her sweet voice in the darkness repeating the

ancient Commemoration for the Dead, from the Canon of the Mass.

"Remember also, O Lord, thy servants who are gone before us with the sign of faith, and sleep the sleep of peace. Give them, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace, for that Christ's sake, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Once more she bent her head and was silent for a time. Then as she knelt, her hands moved silently along the marble and pressed the two folded hands of the man beside her, and she looked at him.

"Let us be friends," she said simply.

"Such as I am, I am yours."

Then their hands clasped. They both started and looked down, for the fingers were cold and wet and dark.

It was the blood of Angus Dalrymple that had sealed their friendship.

The swift sure blade had struck him as he stood there, repeating the name of his dead wife. There had been no one near the door and none to see the quick, black deed. Strong hands had thrown his falling body within the marble balustrade, that was still wet with his heart's blood.

There Paul Griggs found him, lying on his back, stretched to his length in the dim shadow between

the rail and the altar. He had paid the price at last, a loving, sinning, suffering, faithful, faultful man.

But the friendship that was so grimly consecrated on that night, was the truest that ever was between man and woman.

END OF VOL. II.

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